

INTERCESSIONS Please pray for the long term sick and those in special need, among them:

Holly Ryan, John Bason, Wendy Webb, Ann-Marie and Andy, David Games, Daniel Argov, Abigail, Melanie, Dan, Angela, Anna and Phoenix, Philip, Chris, Lewis, Timothy, Ilona Zimon, Steven Wiltshire, Jenny Hey, Julie, Michael, Sara Ali, John Cuff, Sue Goodall, Alex Underwood, Janet Semper, Peter Parsons, Richard Gurney, Brian, Ray Hey

PALM SUNDAY OF THE LORD'S PASSION

10.15 Blessing of Palms in Trinity College Chapel

followed by procession to St Mary Magdalen's.

10.30 approx. High Mass with the singing of the Passion according to Luke.

TENEBRAE will be sung on Wednesday of Holy Week at 7:30pm.

DIARY DATE The Annual Parochial Meeting will take place on Wednesday 28th April at 7:30pm in church.

SUNDAY CELEBRANTS 7th March 8am, 10:30am, 5:30pm Fr Peter; 14th March 8am Fr Richard, 10.30am, 5.30pm Fr Peter; 21st March 8am Fr Peter; 10.30am Sr Margaret Anne, 5.30pm Fr Peter; 28th March 8am Fr Richard, 10.30am, 5.30pm Fr Peter.

THE WAY OF THE CROSS We continue to celebrate Stations of the Cross and Benediction on Wednesday evenings during Lent, at 7:30pm. Each service will feature a short address after Stations, and will conclude with Benediction. The theme of this year's addresses will be "The Grace of God". Please try to make this service part of your Lenten observance.

LENT COLLECTION Our Lent collection this year is again in aid of Helen & Douglas House. Please take a collection box to fill, and a Gift Aid envelope, and return your collected contribution in Eastertide.

GIFT AID ENVELOPES If you are a UK tax payer, please do not put loose money into the collection plate, but put it first into a Gift Aid envelope with your name on the front, which allows us to reclaim the tax payable on that amount.

RIDE AND STRIDE A magnificent effort in September at the annual "Ride and Stride" in aid of the Oxfordshire Historic Churches Trust saw seven of our members raise a total of £3404, of which one half came directly to St Mary Magdalen's. Thanks are due to Muriel Hunt, Mary Beer, Miranda Jones, Glenn Sheasby, Jonathan Roberts, Hannah Milner and Nigel Speight. The work of the Trust in caring for Oxfordshire's historic places of worship is a huge task, from which we as a church continue to benefit enormously—recently, we received a grant for £4000 to go towards the cost of the work on the drainage at the east end of the building.

GIANTS OF CHRISTIAN THOUGHT Our new series of study mornings on major thinkers from Christian history was scheduled to begin this Lent, on 6 March, but has had to be postponed. It will now kick off in Eastertide instead. The first session will be on Augustine of Hippo (354–430), and the date in April will be confirmed shortly. (Our first speaker, Dr Stan Rosenberg, recently had to return to the US to deal with urgent family illness. We shall keep Stan and his family in our prayers.)

LENTEN QUIET DAYS Members of St Mary Magdalen's are warmly welcomed to join in either or both of two quiet days to be held in March.

Keble College, Oxford is holding a Quiet Day at All Saints Convent on Saturday 6 March 2010, entitled "Pray As You Can Not As You Can't: Making Lent Stick" led by Fr Gerald Beauchamp of All Saints Margaret Street. The cost is £8 for non-Keble chapel members. Bring your own packed lunch. Curry dinner in Cowley afterwards if

you want to come along. Please email allen.shin@keble.ox.ac.uk to reserve your place.

A Quiet Day for Lent on 'Hunger and Hope' Led by Mary Lean and Revd Georgie Simpson of the Oxford Centre for Spiritual Growth Saturday 13th March 2010 10.30 am to 4.30 pm The Priory, Begbroke, Oxford (Parking available or regular bus service) Everyone is welcome. Advance booking recommended. Cost £15. Contact: Revd Georgie Simpson info@ocsg.uk.net 07919 517 516

VOCATIONS TO MINISTRY continue to play a central role in our parish life. Recently Jo Kershaw, who left us last year for a post at St Alban's Abbey, was recommended to train for the priesthood. Three more of our number will be attending selection panels in the next two months. In February an extremely successful vocations event was hosted by Sr Margaret Anne at All Saints Convent, with a dozen participants and much promise for future meetings. (Please speak to Sr Margaret Anne or Melanie Marshall if you would like to be added to their mailing list.)

THE MINISTRY OF HOSPITALITY is an often underestimated part of Christian mission. For several years now Ruth Wynne-Davies has taken an energetic lead in such activities, and shortly Rachel Elliott will take over as the co-ordinator of all our various entertainings, winings and dinings. If you do not know Rachel, you can expect her to introduce herself, not least because she will be seeking new volunteers—the system requires at least two people every Sunday (one to set up, and one or two to clear up) as well as more elaborate plans for special events.

VICARAGE TEA The next Vicarage Tea will take place on Wednesday 24th March at 3:30pm at 15 Beaumont Street. Philip McLean will offer a short talk entitled "Tales from a diplomatic life". All are most welcome.

FROM A SERMON FOR THE 1st SUNDAY OF LENT by Fr Peter

The ascetic life, as practised by Anthony and the other remarkable people we call the Desert Fathers, is not a rejection of the physical world. Anti-materialism is a doctrine against which Christianity has battled from its inception. The doctrine of the incarnation is a reaffirmation of the Biblical doctrine of creation, in that it reminds us that what God has made is very good. The term *askesis*, from which we take the word "ascetic", really means exercise, an act of striving to improve. We begin this season of Lent by examining the exemplar for all this striving—the forty days spent by Jesus in the wilderness, being subject to temptation.

For the Biblical tradition as for the Desert Fathers, the wilderness is a place of learning, learning anew one's relationship with the God who provides, and learning the truth of how to live in relationship with that God. In the wilderness of Sinai the people received from Moses the law which would be the basis of their national life. So in the wilderness Jesus affirms the truth about God by rejecting the assaults of devilish temptation and pride and remaining true to his mission as the one who would inaugurate the kingdom. The wilderness brings trial and suffering, because it is the place in which survival is impossible without the presence of the Lord, the place through which the Lord leads his people to the new life on the other side.

Among the many preserved sayings of the Desert Fathers we find these words of St Anthony: "Whoever hammers a lump of iron, first decides what he is going to make of it, a scythe, a sword or an axe. Even so we ought to make up our minds what kind of virtue we want to forge, or we labour in vain."

The gospel narrative of Jesus' temptation shows him submit himself to the demons which haunt him, so as to overcome them in obedience to the Father. His example is basic to our observance of Lent, but we can misunderstand it if we try too hard at its specific imitation. Jesus' vocation is nothing less than the redemption of the

world, the inauguration of the kingdom. Our vocation is subsequent to that decisive act of God, we are called to be holy precisely because Jesus makes us so. But he makes us so here and now, in the material world which he transforms by his incarnate presence. We are not removed from the world but called to struggle within it against the demons which dazzle us with wealth and pride and lust but most of all with doubt and self-loathing and fear. It is with the knowledge of these real struggles that we must understand the wilderness tradition and the discipline of prayer and fasting, the exercise of *askesis*, which we undertake again during these seven weeks of Lent. Lent is our forty days in the wilderness. Our prayer and fasting, our abstinence and our discipline, are symbolised by this desert place. To understand what we are doing we must understand something important about the desert, and it is this: the demons do not live in the Wilderness. Jesus does not go into the wilderness because that is where Satan lives, and the Desert Fathers do not retreat to the wilderness because that is the place of evil. Quite the opposite. Temptation, evil, the demons which haunt us, are always and everywhere present. They disguise themselves, concealed within everything we do and say in the daily routines of our life which we take for granted, which we think are safe and normal. By far the most dangerous temptation is that which one does not recognise as a temptation. The important thing about the wilderness is not that the demons are there, but that there is nothing else there. There we can see our demons for what they really are, because only there can they find no concealment, no worldly place to hide, only there can we recognise them, confront them and try to learn, as disciples, how to overcome them. The season of Lent, then, is the church's gift which enables us to undertake this process of recognition and learning. It gives us the space, the opportunity, to see ourselves as we really are, without the trappings of city and people and money and lust.

Another oft-told story of the Desert Fathers is that of three friends who devoted themselves to the gospel, one to be a peacemaker, the second to visit the sick, and the third to live in tranquillity. The first two, being dissatisfied with themselves, sought out the third to ask his help. He demonstrated their difficulty by stirring up a pool of water and asking them to see their reflected faces. They could not. Time passed, the water became still, and they could see themselves clearly.

St Anthony's warning is that, just as a blacksmith forging iron, we need to know what we want before we begin our spiritual exercise. And we know what we want, we know what is lacking, through this process of self-examination, though looking at ourselves, through the learning, the discipline, which Lent offers us as a gift. Lent is not, then, the opportunity to triumph over all our weakness and temptation, it is the opportunity to see ourselves in truth, to recognise and register our faults, to acknowledge our powerlessness over sin and evil so that, come Holy Week and Easter, we will be able not simply to rejoice at the wonder which is Christ's swallowing up of human pride, weakness, and violence, but also look forward in hope to enacting the consequences of that victory, to living out to the full the life of Easter to which we are called. Lent will allow us to know ourselves fully as we are known, to recognise both our failures and pride, and the grace of God which transforms them.

Sunday Readings

MARCH 7TH:	Exodus 3.1-8, 13-15	1 Cor 10.1-6, 10-12	Luke 13.1-9
MARCH 14TH:	Joshua 5.9-12	2 Cor 5.17-21	Luke 15.1-3, 11-12
MARCH 21ST:	Isaiah 43.16-21	Philippians 3.8-14	John 8.1-11
MARCH 28TH:	Isaiah 50.4-7	Philippians 2.6-11	Luke 22.14-23.56



ST MARY MAGDALEN

Services
Sundays : Eucharist at 8 am and 5.30 pm
 Mattins 10 am
 High Mass at 10.30 am
Weekdays : Eucharist at 12.15 pm and 6.00 pm
 Morning Prayer 8.15 am, Evening Prayer 5.40 pm

Confessions

Daily after the 12.15 pm Mass, Wednesdays & Saturdays at 6.30 pm

Parish Clergy

The Reverend Dr Peter Groves
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Calendar for March 2010

1	Mon	David, Bp	<i>John our Bishop</i>
2	Tue	Feria (Lent)	<i>Rowan our Archbishop</i>
3	Wed	Feria (Lent)	<i>Children's church</i>
4	Thur	Feria (Lent)	<i>Churches Together</i>
5	Fri	Feria (Lent)	<i>Christ Church Cathedral</i>
6	Sat	Feria (Lent)	<i>Missionaries</i>
7	Sun	3RD SUNDAY IN LENT	<i>Parish community</i>
8	Mon	Feria (Lent)	<i>The Gatehouse</i>
9	Tue	Feria (Lent)	<i>Theologians</i>
10	Wed	Feria (Lent)	<i>Religious communities</i>
11	Thur	Feria (Lent)	<i>Spiritual directors</i>
12	Fri	Feria (Lent)	<i>Monthly requiem</i>
13	Sat	Feria (Lent)	<i>Christian Aid</i>
14	Sun	4TH SUNDAY IN LENT	<i>Parish community</i>
15	Mon	Feria (Lent)	<i>The PCC</i>
16	Tue	Feria (Lent)	<i>Confessors</i>
17	Wed	Patrick, B: <i>Anointing at the 6pm mass</i>	<i>Ireland</i>
18	Thur	Feria: <i>Anointing at the 12.15pm mass</i>	<i>Healing</i>
19	Fri	Joseph, husband of the BVM	<i>Parents</i>
20	Sat	Feria (Lent)	<i>Oxfam</i>
21	Sun	5TH SUNDAY IN LENT	<i>Parish community</i>
22	Mon	Feria (Lent)	<i>The elderly</i>
23	Tue	Feria (Lent)	<i>Preachers</i>
24	Wed	Feria (Lent)	<i>Oxford's hospitals</i>
25	Thur	ANNUNCIATION OF THE LORD	<i>Thanksgiving for the incarnation</i>
26	Fri	Feria (Lent)	<i>Vocations</i>
27	Sat	Feria (Lent)	<i>Helen & Douglas House</i>
28	Sun	PALM SUNDAY	<i>Parish community</i>
29	Mon	Holy Week	<i>Peace in the Holy Land</i>
30	Tue	Holy Week	<i>Ordinands</i>
31	Wed	Holy Week	<i>The persecuted church</i>
