

4th Sunday of Lent (Laetare Sunday) — 15th March 2026

St Benedict's Parish Newsletter Stratton-on-the-Fosse

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Sunday Masses

Saturday	5.00pm	St Benedict's
Sunday	10.00am	Abbey Church
Sunday	11.00am	St Benedict's

4th Sunday of Lent Today's Gospel offers a wonderful parable of God's grace at work in real life: a man born blind is indeed healed by Jesus; but we are also introduced, by St John the Evangelist, to the Temple authorities and others who sometimes made life difficult for our Lord – although this miracle is fully 'authenticated' in the end! It will be worth listening to the full version of this passage from St John, chapter 9, so as to realise how many different sorts of people were called upon, that day in Jerusalem, to bear witness of one of the miracles of Jesus in the Temple at the heart of the city. It is a 'landmark' miracle to show the impact of our Lord's ministry in the holy city of his own faith. This is where Jesus was acclaimed as 'light of the world' because (in His own words from the first century, as we heard last Sunday) 'salvation is from the Jews'. Today's second reading might remind us of how the Church aspires to be different from the Temple, wherever the 'children of light' are to be found. Today, on Mothering Sunday, we aspire to be a nurturing community for the nourishment of God's children – in word and sacrament – with the grace and truth of Jesus Christ. The reading from the prophet Samuel suggests various ways in which we might even be 'anointed' for this!

Second Collections / CAFOD Some recent collections made in St Benedict's have been acknowledged with thanks: the Christmas collection for CCS Adoption raised £203.15 and the White Flower Appeal for the Society for the Protection of Unborn Children raised £388.24. Last week's Lent collection for CAFOD raised more than £400 and further donations can be entrusted to Fr Martin (or use the Dona machine) until the end of March

St Benedict's Day / RCIA Halfway through Lent, we are observing some major saints' days this week, culminating in some extra celebrations of our patron St Benedict on Saturday. Abbot Nicholas will celebrate the morning Mass in the Abbey Church while, at St Benedict's, we are asked to host a visit from St John's Parish in Bath, whose catechumens will be with us from around 9 am until mid-afternoon for a retreat to be led by Dom Anselm Brumwell – Fr Anselm will be principal celebrant for the 9.30 am Mass in St Benedict's. 'RCIA' stands for 'Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults' and we are asked to pray for all those (catechumens or other candidates) who are to be baptised or otherwise received into the Church with the Easter Sacraments early next month

Parish Safeguarding – Parish Representative –
Hettie McDermott is the Parish safeguarding representative and she can be contacted on mcdermotthj@outlook.com

Weekday Masses

Tuesday 17th March — St Patrick, Bishop Stations of the Cross	9.30am 10.00am	Holy Ghost
Thursday 19th March — St Joseph Spouse of Blessed Virgin Mary Rosary	6.00pm 6.30pm	Abbey Church St Benedict's
Friday 20th March - 4th week in Lent Stations of the Cross	9.30am 6.30pm	Holy Ghost St Benedict's
Saturday 21st March — Passing of St Benedict	9.30am	St Benedict's

Reconciliation Fr Martin is always available for Confession before Mass even though it is necessary to go and look for him! (Gone are the days of 'assistant curates' when you could find a priest waiting in the confessional). This is the best time of year for Confession – that vital part of the Sacrament of Reconciliation – as we prepare for Easter; to find out more, please come to the celebration of Reconciliation in St Benedict's at **6 pm on Friday March 27th** – following which there will be time for individual Confession and Absolution; participants can also take part in the Stations of the Cross from **6.30 pm**

First Holy Communion The course for children aged eight and over continues this Sunday at 11 am: for the moment we are meeting fortnightly during term-time and the course will be weekly on the Sundays of June, leading to First Holy Communion on **Sunday July 5th**. The children should have completed at least ten Sunday sessions by then. Please contact Mrs Angela Bennett or Fr Martin if your child would like to sign up

CAFOD The Lent collection for CAFOD, which remains open until the end of March. Please use the Dona machine at the back of church or hand your contribution to Fr Martin, using a Gift Aid envelope if appropriate)

The Passing of St Benedict Abbot Nicholas will celebrate Mass in the Abbey Church at **10.30 am on Saturday 21st March**, attended by Downside School. All welcome. (NB: earlier than other weekday Masses with the School.)

Big Lent Walk St Benedict's Primary School are inviting our parishioners to take part in the 'Big Lent Walk' (a CAFOD initiative), which is being organised for the schoolchildren to take place on **Thursday, March 19th**: fuller details will be announced this coming weekend. (In case of wet weather, the walk will take place the following Thursday, March 26th). You can use the school Just Giving page to donate - https://www.justgiving.com/fundraising/st-bens-fundraising-page?utm_medium=FA&utm_source=CL ('underscore' after each 'utm') - and thus contribute to the work of CAFOD in alleviating poverty around the globe

Memorial Acclamation
When we eat this Bread and drink this Cup, we proclaim your Death, O Lord, until you come again

First reading—1 Samuel 16:1b, 6-7, 10-13a
David is anointed king of Israel.

In those days: The LORD said to Samuel, 'Fill your horn with oil, and go. I will send you to Jesse the Bethlehemite, for I have provided for myself a king among his sons.' When they came, he looked on Eliab and thought, 'Surely the LORD's anointed is before him.' But the LORD said to Samuel, 'Do not look on his appearance or on the height of his stature, because I have rejected him. For the LORD sees not as man sees: man looks on the outward appearance, but the LORD looks on the heart.' And Jesse made seven of his sons pass before Samuel. And Samuel said to Jesse, 'The LORD has not chosen these.' Then Samuel said to Jesse, 'Are all your sons here?' And he said, 'There remains yet the youngest, but behold, he is keeping the sheep.' And Samuel said to Jesse, 'Send and get him, for we will not sit down till he comes here.' And he sent and brought him in. Now he was ruddy and had beautiful eyes and was handsome. And the LORD said, 'Arise, anoint him, for this is he.' Then Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him in the midst of his brothers. And the Spirit of the LORD rushed upon David from that day forward.

Responsorial Psalm -Ps 23(22):1-3a. 3b-4. 5. 6. R1
The LORD is my shepherd; there is nothing I shall want.

The LORD is my shepherd;
there is nothing I shall want.

Fresh and green are the pastures
where he gives me repose.
Near restful waters he leads me;
he revives my soul.

He guides me along the right path,
for the sake of his name.
Though I should walk in the valley of the shadow of death,
no evil would I fear, for you are with me.
Your crook and your staff will give me comfort.

You have prepared a table before me
in the sight of my foes.
My head you have anointed with oil;
my cup is overflowing.

Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me
all the days of my life.
In the LORD's own house shall I dwell
for length of days unending.

Second reading—Ephesians 5:8-14

'Arise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you.'

Brothers and Sisters: At one time you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light, for the fruit of light is found in all that is good and right and true, and try to discern what is pleasing to the Lord. Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them. For it is shameful even to speak of the things that they do in secret. But when anything is exposed by the light, it becomes visible, for anything that becomes visible is light. Therefore it says, 'Awake, O sleeper, and arise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you.'

Gospel Acclamation—John 8:12

Praise and honour to you, Lord Jesus.
I am the light of the world, says the Lord;
whoever follows me will have the light of life.
Praise and honour to you, Lord Jesus.

Gospel—John 9:1-41

'He went and washed and received his sight.'

At that time: As Jesus passed by, he saw a man blind from birth. And his disciples asked him, 'Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?' Jesus answered, 'It was not that this man sinned, or his parents, but that the works of God might be displayed in him. We must work the works of him who sent me while it is day; night is coming, when no one can work. As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world.' Having said these things, he spat on the ground and made mud with the saliva. Then he anointed the man's eyes with the mud and said to him, 'Go, wash in the pool of Siloam' (which means Sent). So he went and washed and came back seeing.

The neighbours and those who had seen him before as a beggar were saying, 'Is this not the man who used to sit and beg?' Some said, 'It is he.' Others said, 'No, but he is like him.' He kept saying, 'I am the man.' So they said to him, 'Then how were your eyes opened?' He answered, 'The man called Jesus made mud and anointed my eyes and said to me, "Go to Siloam and wash." So I went and washed and received my sight.' They said to him, 'Where is he?' He said, 'I do not know.'

They brought to the Pharisees the man who had formerly been blind. Now it was a Sabbath day when Jesus made the mud and opened his eyes. So the Pharisees again asked him how he had received his sight. And he said to them, 'He put mud on my eyes, and I washed, and I see.' Some of the Pharisees said, 'This man is not from God, for he does not keep the Sabbath.' But others said, 'How can a man who is a sinner do such signs?' And there was a division among them. So they said again to the blind man, 'What do you say about him, since he has opened your eyes?' He said, 'He is a prophet.'

The Jews did not believe that he had been blind and had received his sight, until they called the parents of the man who had received his sight and asked them, 'Is this your son, who you say was born blind? How then does he now see?' His parents answered, 'We know that this is our son and that he was born blind. But how he now sees we do not know, nor do we know who opened his eyes. Ask him; he is of age. He will speak for himself.' His parents said these things because they feared the Jews, for the Jews had already agreed that if anyone should confess Jesus to be Christ, he was to be put out of the synagogue. Therefore his parents said, 'He is of age; ask him.'

So for the second time they called the man who had been blind and said to him, 'Give glory to God. We know that this man is a sinner.' He answered, 'Whether he is a sinner I do not know. One thing I do know, that though I was blind, now I see.' They said to him, 'What did he do to you? How did he open your eyes?' He answered them, 'I have told you already, and you would not listen. Why do you want to hear it again? Do you also want to become his disciples?' And they reviled him, saying, 'You are his disciple, but we are disciples of Moses. We know that God has spoken to Moses, but as for this man, we do not know where he comes from.' The man answered, 'Why, this is an amazing thing! You do not know where he comes from, and yet he opened my eyes. We know that God does not listen to sinners, but if anyone is a worshipper of God and does his will, God listens to him. Never since the world began has it been heard that anyone opened the eyes of a man born blind. If this man were not from God, he could do nothing.' They answered him, 'You were born in utter sin, and would you teach us?' And they cast him out.

Jesus heard that they had cast him out, and having found him he said, 'Do you believe in the Son of Man?' He answered, 'And who is he, sir, that I may believe in him?' Jesus said to him, 'You have seen him, and it is he who is speaking to you.' He said, 'Lord, I believe', and he worshipped him. Jesus said, 'For judgement I came into this world, that those who do not see may see, and those who see may become blind.' Some of the Pharisees near him heard these things, and said to him, 'Are we also blind?' Jesus said to them, 'If you were blind, you would have no guilt; but now that you say, "We see", your guilt remains.'