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Editorial

Lent is different from the rest of the year. Lent in Old English is 'lencten' – lengthen. Daylight is lengthening. Hurrah for that. But Easter seems a long way off (unless you're a supermarket manager and think it's next week.)

The skeleton of Saint Francis is now on display for a month in the Basilica at Assisi. The whole of the saint's chosen life was a clear preparation for meeting the Lord. Our far shorter, less intensive, Lent must remind, encourage, urge us to make our own hopeful way towards Easter. 'Where can we live but days?' asks poet Philip Larkin. So we take up our days and follow Jesus.

Jenny

CAFOD Prayer for Lent

- Growth & Grace

God of growth,
in the beginning
you planted a garden
and walked with us,
your beloved creation.
Teach us to tread lightly
as we care for all you made.

God of Gethsemane,
you chose the tree of suffering
which would bring us new life.
May its roots grow deep within us,
inspiring us to seek justice
so all people may flourish
in the garden of your grace.

Amen.

God the Sower,
you plant seeds of your Kingdom
in the soil of our hearts.
Water them with your Word
and weed out fear and selfishness.
Cultivate in us your compassion
so we may truly love our neighbours.

Prayer: Caroline Stanton/CAFOD

The Three Days of Darkness

As one gets older, there is far more time to look back and reminisce on your early years. Of course, memory can be very selective, but I find I keep going back to events that need an explanation, an unravelling, in the cool, calm light of age.

One trauma I remember very well took place when I must have been about 10 years old. There was this fear going around, that the world was soon to come across three days of darkness, that would be catastrophic. I have no idea how widespread this prophecy of doom and gloom was, but it certainly affected me enough for me to remember it decades later.

I remember discussing with my friend next door what could be so terrible in having to survive three days without light, and her telling me that there is a danger of slicing a loaf of bread and cutting your finger. I felt slightly perturbed by that prospect, but not overly anxious. Little did I know, at the time, that, according to the prophecy, the darkness could only be illuminated by blessed beeswax candles, no other artificial light would work.

Things came to a head a few weeks later when I was waiting in front of my local parish church, for a procession to start. There was a power cut, and one of the Franciscan priests shouted out in jest, "The three days of darkness have started." That is all I needed to hear! I was never very athletic, but my run home might well have qualified me for the Olympics. I cannot remember what my parents made of my sudden retirement from the procession, but the three days of darkness did not worry me so much after that.

Looking up the prophecy today, I discover that the concept is in fact attributed to an Italian mystic, Blessed Anna Maria Taigi (1768-1837), but is not supported by any Catholic teaching. It probably originated from one of the plagues of Egypt, but is attributed to a number of saints and mystics, though nothing appears in their writings. It was at one time falsely linked to Padre Pio. The three days of darkness feature in St. Faustina's private revelations as an eschatological event preceding the end of the world as we know it.

There is enough there to frighten the living daylights out of an impressionable ten-year-old. Alex tells me that what terrified him growing up was the conjunction of the planets. Funny that the real events of the atom bomb or the Cuban missile crisis did not give us as many traumas, as we grew older.

Going back to the three days of darkness, there can be a more compassionate interpretation for Catholics today. The church liturgy gives us The Easter Triduum, leading up to Easter Sunday. The days could serve as a reminder of dark time that Jesus lay in the tomb and the need for reconciliation before the light, joy and hope that Easter brings to our lives.

Wishing you all a very blessed and happy Easter.

Rose Krzyz

St John's Church, Ranmoor

It is a privilege to be able to write a few words about the church where I have been Vicar since 2018.

St John's Church of England Church, Ranmoor is dedicated to St John the Evangelist, the writer of the Fourth Gospel. It was first built in 1879 to provide a place of worship for people in the prosperous new suburb of Ranmoor. Many of members of its congregation owned businesses in Sheffield. Unfortunately, a fire in 1887 destroyed everything but the spire (which is second only in height to that of St Marie's Cathedral). The church was, however, quickly rebuilt to a new design and it reopened in 1888. St John's is a very beautiful space and I feel privileged to minister here.

St John's stands in the liberal catholic tradition of the Church of England. The Eucharist is central to our Sunday morning worship and in the evening we have Evensong, a particularly beautiful Anglican service which goes back centuries. St John's boasts a fine choir of children and adults and music is an important part of our life together.

For many years, St Johns' Vicarage was the large house across the road from the church. In the early 1980's, visionary members of the church raised money to buy it from the Diocese of Sheffield to create a parish centre. Today



this accommodates a wide range of church and community events, including our Wednesday lunch club and Thursday morning toddler group.

Unfortunately, the aforementioned spire has some structural problems. We are currently raising money to fund its repair but also hope to make our church more welcoming with the provision of more toilets and a refreshment area. Many of you will have come to St John's for concerts or funerals but I hope that everyone who reads this will feel welcome at St John's. It is good to know that we have brothers and sisters in Christ nearby and I hope that we can work more closely together in the future.

Matthew Rhodes
Vicar of St John's Ranmoor

Gold Medal for Jonathan Yewdall

At Mass on 18 January the Gold Medal of Merit of the Guild of St Stephen was presented to Jonathan Yewdall, our parish M.C., by Father Kevin and Deacon Stephen. The award is in recognition of service over a period of more than fifty years.

Jonathan started serving at his parish church, St Patrick's, Bradford (Father Kevin's first parish after ordination), but it was only when he moved to London, after taking a history degree at Newcastle University and joining the civil service, that he started serving at Westminster Cathedral and joined the Guild. These were exciting times at HQ. He was chair of the diocese's Liturgy Committee during the centenary year, 1994-95, and recalls acting as escort to the Duchess of Kent during the Centenary Mass.



When he moved to Sheffield in 1998, he became the parish M.C., charged by the priests (Father Killeen and Father Kevin) "to develop a community to support their work on the altar" (as he puts it very well). Since then, we have regularly had 10-20 servers enrolled in the Guild. Links are maintained with local schools, particularly Notre Dame High School, and a number of Guild members have used serving as their voluntary activity for Duke of Edinburgh

Awards.

Guild members serve with great reverence and commitment. Everything runs smoothly, because of careful practice, so we may not always notice them, but we all very much appreciate the work that they do. There will be a further opportunity to recognise their work in the spring, when three Certificates of 5 Years' Service and two Silver Medals will be awarded. Watch this space.



New members of the parish may have noticed a certain family resemblance in the team of senior servers. The photo shows (left to right), Peter, Benjamin, Alexander, and Jonathan Yewdall, at the Jubilee Mass for altar servers held at Holy Rood Church, Barnsley, on 20 September 2025.



Edmund King

A Celebration of Unity: International Mass at St. Francis of Assisi Church

On Sunday 25 January 2026, the Sunday of the Word of God, St. Francis of Assisi Church hosted an International Mass that celebrated the universal nature of the Catholic Church and resonated with parishioners from diverse backgrounds.

The Mass was a testament to the richness of our global parish family. Eight parish members contributed to the Liturgy of the Word and the Prayer of the Faithful in their native languages:

- Greek (the first lecture was read in Ancient Greek),
- Arabic (second reading),
- Portuguese,
- Spanish,
- German,
- French,
- Malayalam, and
- Polish.

Each reading was a reminder of the Church's catholicity.

A particularly moving moment was the singing of the French Communion hymn "Voici le Corps et le Sang du Seigneur" from the Communauté de l'Emmanuel, which filled the church with a sense of reverence and unity. The parish music group, as always, provided a beautiful musical backdrop, enhancing the liturgy with talent and devotion.

The readings for the Third Sunday offered a profound theological foundation for the International Mass: Isaiah 8:23–9:3 speaks of a people walking in darkness who have seen a great light. This light, symbolising Christ, unites us across borders and languages, illuminating

our shared journey of faith.

1 Corinthians 1:10-13, 17 calls for unity among believers, urging us to avoid divisions and to be "united in the same mind and the same purpose." This message was palpable as parishioners from different backgrounds stood together in prayer.

Matthew 4:12-23 recounts Jesus' call to His first disciples, inviting them to follow Him and become "fishers of men." This call transcends culture and language, reminding us that we are all called to build God's kingdom together.

The International Mass demonstrated that our diversity is a gift, a reflection of the Church's universal mission.

The organisation was made possible by the dedication of many. David Bellamy designed and printed the booklet for the occasion, ensuring that everyone could follow the liturgy seamlessly. Jonathan Yewdall meticulously coordinated the liturgy.

After the Mass, the celebration continued in the Assisi Hall, where we enjoyed an international buffet. Parish members contributed a delightful array of dishes, including a Syrian baklava, a Greek cheese pie, a Mexican marble cake and a variety of cakes, sweets and savoury treats. It was a symbol of the warmth and generosity that define our community.

The hall was filled with lively conversation, laughter, and the joy of fellowship. It was a moment where everyone felt included, a true testament to the spirit of Christian fellowship that binds us together in faith and love.

It was a pleasure and a privilege to organise this special event and to see so



many people involved. I am deeply grateful for this collective journey. Thank you to Father Kevin for agreeing to the celebration and to a second collection: the generous donations towards the work of Caritas Jerusalem will help the Christians of the Holy Land and the people of Gaza. As we reflect on this beautiful celebration, we are grateful for the diversity that enriches our parish.

The International Mass was not just an event; it was a living expression of our unity in Christ. We hope to continue this tradition next year.

Susanne Staub

S2 Food Bank

Sarah Baker tells me it was my dad, Noel Lynch, who announced at a parish council meeting many years ago that our parish should be supporting a food bank. That's how our link with the S2 Food Bank was begun and it has been firmly forged in the many years since. You may have seen first a large cardboard box in the narthex, followed by a shopping trolley when it became too much to get donations out of the box and into the car of those who do deliveries. The staff and volunteers working at the food bank are hugely appreciative of the donations from our parish and we often figure on their thank you list. In one recent week, after a particular push, we delivered 100 kg of donations to their base at St Swithin's church on the Manor. That donation was particularly needed because donations of food to the food bank are down 90% on where they were this time last year, reflecting I am sure these more straightened times and how people feel about the money in their pockets. Donations have never been more needed though because those cost-of-living crises are even more real for those on the margins of our society.



parcels to those unable to feed themselves or their families. They cover the S1, S2 and S12 postcode areas of Sheffield. Unusually among food banks, whilst professionals can make referrals to them, individuals can also self-refer. I saw a recent post on an S2 community group on Facebook by someone admitting that she was unable to feed herself and her small child due to a recent event. She asked where she could find a food bank, requesting not to be judged for being in the position she was. It was heartening to see the number of responses directing her to the S2 Food Bank and saying she would get help without judgment there.

The S2 Food Bank though does more than just hand out emergency parcels. When it was established, the goal was to help people reach a situation where they did not need food parcels. This is done by getting people to come with information about their financial situation. Volunteers at the food bank then look at the person's finances and see if they can either reduce their debt or increase income through benefits. The food bank has a volunteer benefits advisor and a number of staff trained to do debt counselling. Ideally someone would receive emergency parcels for no more than four weeks. By that time, it is hoped work will have been done to improve their financial situation so they can move on to the community food shop. The shop's goal is to

The core work of the S2 Food Bank is, like all food banks, to provide emergency food

offer a longer-term support, as members can remain part of the community for as long as they meet the criteria. For a payment of £5 they get a generous supply of essential goods and they can go and select what they need from what the shop has. The idea is to make people feel they are living in a more normal world, to have pride in paying something for their food, but at the same time getting the long-term help they need to move towards greater independence in the future.

I have been privileged to volunteer at the S2 Food Bank when they are short staffed, and it is a salutary reminder of how fortunate I am when I see people's gratitude for a couple of bags of shopping. It is lovely when there is enough stock that we can ask them what cereals they would like or what flavour of squash, but even if they have to accept a different colour bread to that which they requested they are always universally grateful. A particular delight has been being there for the Christmas distribution, when the food bank manages to provide an entire Christmas dinner, including mince pies, crackers, and presents for children. At such times I cannot help but reflect how much I have, the ease with which I fill my shopping basket and the many choices I can make about what I eat and drink.



In the Bible, in Matthew 6 v25, Jesus says : "This is why I tell you: do not be worried about the food and drink you need in order to stay alive, or about clothes for your body. After all, isn't life worth more than food? And isn't the body worth more than clothes?" I am sure that is right but it's only natural to worry about how you are going to feed your family. And are we not privileged to be able to be Christ's hands on earth by donating to the Food Bank, whether that is by way of a packet of pasta or a monthly cash donation?

Find out more at <https://www.s2Food Bank.org.uk>

Sarah Lynch

Notes from the Diocese, March 2026

The Hallam Bridge is the newspaper for the diocese. You can reach it via the diocesan website, and also subscribe to it, on line. Here are a couple of items summarised from the latest issue, but there is much more.

Padley Chapel

In 2025 Padley Chapel had more than 3000

visitors, a 36% increase on the year before. This shows a growing appreciation of the 'spiritual, historical and cultural significance' of the chapel and includes visits by a wide variety of groups, as well as private events. A number of walkers called in by chance, many then praising the peaceful atmosphere and setting. Mass was celebrated in the chapel 25 times during 2025.

Padley Chapel is open to the public on Sundays. More volunteers are always welcome, to help to make this possible.

The Sisters of Mercy in Sheffield Sister Clare Smith RSM, the last Sister of Mercy to remain in Sheffield, is moving to Derby. The order has been in Sheffield for 141 years. Many older parishioners will remember their presence here with gratitude. At first they lived and taught in Pitsmoor, living frugally among a poor population. They then moved to Burngreave, where they were for many years. They had three Branch Houses, one

at Wath on Dearne and two in our parish, at Highbury and at Claremont Hospital, where they nursed, and from where they helped in the foundation of St Luke's hospice. Highbury, the last of their convents, closed in 2011.

We pray for Sister Clare, whom many will remember, in her retirement.

Jenny

Hallam Diocesan Pilgrimage to Lourdes

26 June- 2 July 2026

The annual pilgrimage to Lourdes is the highlight of the year for many of those who are regular pilgrims. This year I would like to invite you to consider joining us.

The story of Lourdes – the place where miraculous cures happen- is well known. The latest, the seventy second, was recognized in 2025. Perhaps less well known are the many small miracles that occur.

People find comfort and consolation, a renewal of their faith, and inner strength despite not receiving the grace of a complete, instantaneous cure. I have witnessed this many times when I accompanied pilgrims as a doctor on the pilgrimage.

Our Lady, the Blessed Mother, leads us to her Son, the fount of every blessing. At Lourdes we meet as a diocese with our Bishop and clergy, with old friends, and new ones, and worship, celebrate, and socialise together.



Each year a team of doctors, nurses, male and female helpers, aided by the wonderful young people of the Hallam Youth Pilgrimage have the privilege of accompanying our assisted pilgrims on what many find to be a life changing experience. Perhaps this year you could come as a helper? Or maybe you are wondering if you could be an assisted pilgrim, and unsure whether the pilgrimage is suitable for you?

In either case you could get more information by a contacting

- 01302 247910
- lourdesoffice@hallam-diocese.com

Bookings at www.tangney-tours.com/hallam

The cost is £1010, for flights from Leeds Bradford, full board, six nights, travel insurance and transfers in Lourdes included.

Dr Russell Brynes KSS
Hallam Lourdes Pilgrimage Director