

May, Mary's Month

The keeping of May as Mary's month is a well-known Catholic devotion. In fact, every day of the week and every month is dedicated to one important mystery of our salvation or to a particular saint – Saturday is Mary's day, for example.

But why should May be given to Mary? Perhaps first we need to understand a little about Our Lady herself. The Scriptures clearly tell us about Mary's uniqueness. Gabriel greets her by calling her 'full of grace' and Elizabeth says she is 'blessed among women'. This comes, of course, from Mary's unique role in God's plan for our salvation, her vocation being the Mother of Jesus, the Word made flesh.



This is a vocation she embraced: 'Let it be done to me according to your word' she said to Gabriel. Mary's faith, her trust in God's plan, is immense. She was given no outline of her Son's life, no details of how she would be affected by this, she accepted God's will in simple faith.

To go back to the Old Testament, we may see Mary's uniqueness revealed there too. In the first book of the Kings, the mother of the Israelite King is given great honour and is even one through whom his subjects may make requests of the King himself. She was a trusted confidante and advisor and is thus an exalted and powerful figure in the royal court.

This tradition is continued in the Kingdom established by Jesus Himself. Mary does not have divine powers of herself but rather a profoundly deep relationship with her Son. We ask her to pray for us – 'pray for us sinners now and at the hour of our death' and present our requests to her Son, the King. Furthermore, Jesus Himself named her as our mother from the cross. How could she who had such a faith in God's plan for us in Jesus, not pray for us because it was for us that she said 'Yes!' to God's plan for her.

So, in acknowledging Mary's unique role in the salvation of the world, the Church naturally gives her due honour. Some Christian groups pay scant regard to Mary and Catholics have been criticised for holding the ancient beliefs of the Church. Yet even in that gospel passage where Christ describes as most blessed those who 'hear the word of God and keep it', He must have been thinking of His mother whose hearing and keeping of the Word is unmatched.

But why May? As in so many traditions, the exact answer is uncertain. Originally, there was of course no special month for Mary, and it was only in the 12th century or so that May devotions happened in many places. There would be processions, crownings of statues and a more intense focus on Mary. Part of this may have been in thanksgiving for the end to outbreaks of disease or a calling of a particularly dissolute place back to the Gospel. Yet May is the time of freshness, new growth, and of the promise of coming fruitfulness. These, too, naturally point to Our Lady, whose carrying of the unborn Jesus represents all these things to perfection.

As a model disciple of her Son, Mary provides both example and prayer for us who also seek to be disciples of that same Son. May her prayers and our devotion this month lead us all closer to the blessed fruit of her womb, Jesus.

Fr Stephen Day

EXTRA is for articles and information from parishioners and clergy in the churches of our local Cluster: St Charles Borromeo, Hampton-on-the-Hill; St Francis, Kenilworth; St Augustine, Kenilworth; St Peter's, Leamington Spa; Our Lady's, Lillington; St Mary Immaculate, Warwick; and St Joseph's, Whitnash. It is an opportunity to publish longer pieces that cannot fit into the weekly newsletters of each church. Currently produced from St Joseph's in Whitnash, it would be great to bring some new hands on board to ensure it becomes a truly Cluster-wide online publication. **Information for the June edition should be sent to catholicclusterextra@gmail.com by 25 May.**

Anniversary celebrations Our Lady & St Wulstan, Southam

Our Lady & St Wulstan invites you to join us to celebrate the 150th Anniversary of the arrival of the Sisters of the Poor Child Jesus in Southam, and the 70th Anniversary of the consecration of our church.

On **Saturday 9 May** at 12 noon, Mass will be celebrated by Archbishop Bernard Longley (Livestream www.youtube.com/@OurLadyandStWulstan). After Mass, a buffet Reception will take place in St Mary's Catholic School, just down the road from the church. Please let the organizers know as soon as possible if you plan to attend (by 3 May at the latest). Text 07763 413015 or email fr.des.devenney@rcaob.org.uk or des56@hotmail.com. We look forward to your presence among us.

Fr Desmond Devenney

Diocesan Pilgrimage to Lourdes

Our diocesan pilgrimage is planned for **25–30 May**. As usual, there is a special Mass – the 'Blessing of Hands Mass' – in the Cathedral on the Sunday before departure to prepare those who will be ministering to others. The various priests and bishops present will literally bless the hands of each person playing an active part in serving pilgrims in different ways. Several of the liturgies will be available by the diocesan website and of course our Grotto Mass and the International Mass on the Lourdes streaming, lourdesplus-Vivre le pèlerinage de Lourdes

Our Grotto Mass is planned for Tuesday 26 May at 10.00 am (9.00 am UK time). If you have a particular Mass Intention, you are welcome to send it to me or others who are going... and why not start planning to come along next year?

Fr David Hartley

Our Lady and St Wulstan

Southam's parish will be celebrating several significant anniversaries this year and, although it is outside our cluster of parishes, it is still very near and part of our deanery.

One important bit of history is that St Wulstan was born within the parish, as son of the then Parish Priest in 1008 at Long Itchington. His early studies were at the monasteries in Evesham and Peterborough. After some time as a clerk at Worcester, he then studied for the priesthood and was ordained in 1038. He became a Benedictine monk at Worcester Cathedral Priory and then Bishop of Worcester in 1062.

St Wulstan is the first English bishop known to have made systematic visitations of his diocese. He was anxious that country people should have the chance of going to Mass and encouraged the building of churches on rural manors. An outstanding success of his episcopate was the abolition

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DIARY DATES

MAY 2026

9 May: Anniversary celebrations at Our Lady & St Wulstan, Southam. Mass at 12 noon celebrated by Archbishop Bernard Longley.

19 May: Coventry Newman Circle monthly talk. Starting at 7.30pm in the Margaret Roper Room, St Thomas More Church, Coventry (full details page 4).

24 May: Bring-and-share Pentecost Party from 1.00 pm at the Dormer Centre, St Peter's (full details page 4).

25-30 May: Diocesan Pilgrimage to Lourdes.

JUNE 2026

6 June: Quiz Night, St Joseph's, Whitnash. Doors open 7.00 pm (full details page 6).

13 June: Leamington Peace Festival.

24 June: Children's Liturgy leaders in parishes across our Deanery invited to a session led by Carol Ann Harnett (full details page 3).

of the trade in slaves from Bristol to Viking Ireland. He survived the Norman Conquest to become a trusted adviser of William the Conqueror. St Wulstan died in 1095 at the age of 87.

In 1876, ten Sisters of the Poor Child Jesus, exiled from Germany, were settled at Southam and established an orphanage and school as well as a temporary church. In 1884 it was decided that their small iron chapel, which had been brought here from Cardiff in 1878, should also serve as a mission. In 1886 a resident priest was appointed and the presbytery was built. In 1898 a second, larger iron church was brought here, this time from Birmingham. Large new convent buildings were also added about the same time, from designs by a German architect.

In 1913, Charles Shaw, the brother of James Shaw of Bourton Hall, left a bequest of £5,000 for a new church. This paid the entire cost of the present building. Construction was delayed by the Great War, and the church did not open until 1925. A pleasant small Italo-Byzantine church, the exterior is unassuming yet the interior with its round-arched ceiling is well-proportioned. The sanctuary and Lady Chapel were gradually adorned with Italianate wall paintings by Sister Mary Sales. The church was consecrated by Archbishop Grimshaw on 14 May 1956. Sadly the church has lost much of the painted decoration which once enriched the east end.

In 1972, it was handed over to the diocese, which also acquired the presbytery.

Fr David Hartley



*Interior of Our Lady & St Wulstan's Church.
Photo © Con McHugh*

Children's Liturgy Leaders

We are inviting all leaders of Children's Liturgy in parishes across our Deanery to come to a session on Tuesday 24 June, at 7.15pm at St Francis, Kenilworth. The session will be led by Carol Ann Harnett from our diocese and will give us a chance to learn and share together- and hopefully set up ongoing support and guidance for the future. Please pass on this invitation to everyone involved.

Fr David Hartley



The Joy of Easter's Holy Night

The Easter liturgy in the Holy Night was celebrated with solemnity and joy in our churches. It was a great blessing to welcome into the Church our catechumens and candidates for confirmation who received the sacraments of initiation and who are now united with us in full communion at the Altar of our Lord. We welcome you!

Please continue to pray for Adam, Ben M, Ben P, Cody, Darren, Irene, Leanna, Liam, Lisette, Paul, Ricardo, Ruth, Samantha, Steve and Veronica.

Gareth Astell

Pentecost Party

As in previous years, there will be a bring-and-share lunch on **Sunday 24 May** from 1.00 pm at the Dormer Centre, St Peter's. This is an opportunity to extend our welcome of the newly baptised and recently confirmed, an apt way to conclude the Easter season. There will also be representatives from parish groups providing information about activities and aspects of parish life. All parishioners are welcome so do come and share in a time of celebration and fellowship. If everyone brings something to the meal (savoury, sweet or to drink) then the catering will take care of itself. The Lord will provide! (Genesis 22:14)

Warwick District Foodbank

Thank you for your generous donations, particularly in the run-up to Easter. We have received a thank-you notice from the manager of the local collection hub. Please continue to donate if you can.

Most needed items:

squash (small), pasta sauce, tinned meat, mayo/ketchup, savoury snacks, chocolates/sweets, tinned potatoes, male/female deodorants, shaving gel/razors.

Jackie Rabone

Gareth Astell

Catholic Conversion and Renewal

Coventry Newman Circle will hold one of its regular talks on Tuesday May 19 at 7.30pm at the Margaret Roper Room, St Thomas More, Watercall Avenue, Coventry, CV3 5DE. The speaker will be Peter Larkin on “*David Jones: Catholic Conversion and Renewal*”.

Stephen Ferguson

CAFOD’s Sudan Update

April marked three years since the conflict began in Sudan. Our brothers and sisters are facing what is officially the worst humanitarian crisis in the world. You may remember that parishes across England and Wales supported Sudan through emergency collections two years ago. Violence in Sudan has sadly expanded and now 13.6 million people have fled their homes. While many other charities have been forced to leave, our Church partners remain to support families in Sudan. This has become a terrible, long-term emergency. And yet news broadcasts report so little of the suffering.



Families are still on the move, often for days and weeks at a time in search of safety, walking through bush paths because the main roads are controlled by armed groups. Mothers carry children on their backs, young women and men search desperately for water where wells have long run dry. Many children and women have lost their lives during these weeks of walking without food and water.

Those who reach displacement camps often arrive malnourished, dehydrated and carrying horrific stories of rape and abuse at the hands of armed men. Hunger is everywhere, diseases are breaking out and exploitation, trafficking, and child protection violations are rampant.

And yet, amid this suffering, I have heard of courage and solidarity. Our partner Caritas Sudan, alongside other local organisations, is providing food, cash assistance, safe water, nutrition, and more. They are saving lives every day. But the gap between overwhelming needs and available support is massive.

This is why regular monthly giving is so vital. Monthly gifts are an act of steady love for our neighbours, a way of saying: “*We will not abandon you; we will stand with you until peace is restored.*” It is like the Good Samaritan who stopped, cared for the wounded man, paid for his treatment, and promised to give more if needed. That is the kind of faithful solidarity Sudan needs today.

Please consider a monthly donation if you can, or a one-off donation. Visit <https://cafod.org.uk>

Kayode Akintola, CAFOD’s Head of Region in Africa

Kayode Akintola, CAFOD’s Head of Region in Africa

Love Thy Neighbour

I recently found an autograph book that belonged to my late Uncle Les which included this quote: “*Whatever our colour, religion and status, let us work together for the furtherance of peace and harmony in a natural way. Let us help the fellow human, and do our duty to mankind in the troubled world of today.*” He wrote that in April 1959 aged only 15.

Unfortunately, though, it is still very pertinent today, over 65 years later. Hatred is nothing new. However, I believe the extent and impact of modern communications and technology has become one of the most common ways of spreading hate, threatening peace around the world.

Georgina Thacker

Thank You!

From SPAN for supporting our Lenten Alms Appeal



50 local families received
£40 food vouchers



£800 Sent to House of Light and Hope – Lebanon



£800 To Friends of the Holy Land



SPAN is very grateful for your continued support – enabling us
play a small part in helping others.

During these very difficult times for so many, your compassion brings hope
where it is needed most. Thank you for standing with us. 🙏

SPAN 
Supporting People Across Nations

Together,
we bring hope
and help. ♥

Each month, SPAN supports those in
need both locally and globally.



The Warwick District Foodbank
Providing essential food
across seven centres.



**Young People First
(Leamington Spa)**
Offering counselling and
support for young people.



New Chapters
Helping individuals
rebuild their lives.



**House of Light and Hope
(Lebanon)**
Supporting vulnerable
communities in crisis.



**Mission hospitals
(Uganda & Kenya)**
Delivering vital
healthcare.



Please consider setting up a regular
standing order to help sustain
this important work.

Thank you ♥
for your support.

In April SPAN also supported appeals from these
charities:

+ **Bornstar Children Centre** in the slums of
Nairobi, **Kenya £ 400**: “While our children have
flourished through learning, growing, we now face
critical challenges from a leaking roof and for our
feeding program facing a funding shortage - a
lifeline that keeps vulnerable children healthy”

+ **Turbo Ghana** to help people access fresh water,
sanitation, toilets and latrines in impoverished
communities in **Ghana £400**

+ **Children of the Dump** in the **Philippines £ 400**:
“following the landfill collapse many families we
know through our work live in very difficult
circumstances, and some rely on waste picking on
the dump”

+ **CAFOD** for Darfur, **Sudan £ 100**. SPAN gives £
100 every month for Darfur.

See www.catholicleamington.org.uk/span where
our SPAN booklet offers ways you can donate to
SPAN e.g. Church boxes, Standing Order with your
bank, Direct Bank Transfer.

‘Follow’ and ‘Like’ SPAN on Facebook with link
<https://www.facebook.com/share/1DCfZ4yYgP/>

Contact our Secretary – paulhayden444@gmail.com with any questions.



Quiz

St Joseph's Church Whitnash

Murcott Road East , CV31 2JJ

Saturday 6th June

Doors Open 7pm for eyes down at 7.30pm

Admission £4

Raffle in aid of Church Maintenance

Tea and Coffee Provided ,Bring your own Food/Alcohol