Lent Pastoral Letter 2026 of Archbishop Shane Mackinlay

There have been significant changes for us in the Archdiocese of Brisbane over the last year. Shortly after Easter last year, Pope Leo XIV succeeded Pope Francis, and then in September I took up my new ministry as Archbishop of Brisbane. Last week, Pope Leo issued his first Message for Lent, in which he reflects on three themes: listening, fasting and our shared journey together. I was particularly struck by the first of these themes, as I feel like much of my focus over these early days as Archbishop has been on listening. I need to learn about the people of the Archdiocese, its parishes and communities, its schools, hospitals and aged care, its organisations and agencies. I need to hear about the joys and sorrows that people carry, as well as the hopes and fears that are part of looking to the future.

Pope Leo points out that listening is not just something we do when we enter a new situation. Rather, it is a critical ongoing part of healthy relationships with one another and with God. Lent is a time when we seek to open ourselves to conversion: acknowledging our failures and mistakes, so that we can turn again to God and renew our relationships with those around us. The journey of conversion always begins with listening. As Pope Leo says: 'Every path towards conversion begins by allowing the Word of God to touch our hearts.' That can only happen if we make space, stepping back from the noise around us, and from all that we want to say and convince others about, so that there is space to hear and to listen.

Making space for listening is an act of humility and generosity. It shows a deep commitment to the other. In Pope Leo's words, 'the willingness to listen is the first way we demonstrate our desire to enter into relationship with someone.' We know what a precious gift that is from our own experiences of another person really listening to us.

Pope Leo proposes that the best model we have for listening is God's relationship with his people. Again and again, God's first response in the scriptures is to assure us: 'I have heard my people's cry.' And Jesus' own ministry is shaped by listening to the needs and hopes of those he encounters. So, as Pope Leo says, 'we must allow God to teach us to listen as he does.'

In our own context, listening has been the starting point for our synodal journey, both in our contribution to the Synod for a Synodal Church and in our own celebration of the Archdiocese's Synod 24. We have experienced that a dialogue built on listening allows us to discern together where God is calling us. That experience allows us to recognise the importance of Pope Leo's observation that 'conversion refers not only to one's conscience, but to the quality of our relationships and dialogue.'

More broadly in our Australian community, listening with care, compassion and openness is desperately needed as we seek to respond to the division, shock and grief that we are carrying after the appalling attack at Bondi last December.

As we enter this Season of Lent, most of our parishes will be commencing the final stage of preparation for baptism of those who wish to become Christian and for reception of Christians baptised in other Churches who seek to enter full communion with the Catholic Church. It is a privilege to accompany these elect and candidates on their path to Easter, as they offer us a model of listening to God's Word in a way that has led them on a journey of conversion, discipleship and renewal. Let us pray for them and be inspired by them throughout this Season of Lent, as we all seek to be renewed in listening and responding to one another and to the Word of God.

Yours sincerely, MOST REV. SHANE MACKINLAY

OUR LADY OF FATIMA PARISH

Acacia Ridge | Algester
Calamvale | Parkinson
| Larapinta | Pallara

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MASS TIMES

Tue: 5:30pm—Holy Mass
6:00pm Eucharist Adoration
Wed | Thurs | Fri | Sat 9 am
Saturday 4.30pm (Vigil)
Sunday 9am & 5pm

CONFESSIONS

Tues: 6:00pm to 6:30pm (or by appointment)

BAPTISMS

3rd Sunday of the month 10.15am

PIETY STALL

1st Sunday each month

SCHOOLS

Our Lady of Fatima School
www.ourladyoffatima.qld.edu.au
07 3275 1152
pacaciaridge@bne.catholic.edu.au
St Stephens School Algester
www.ststephens.qld.edu.au
07 3711 4911
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FATIMA NEWS
FIRST SUNDAY OF LENT
22 February 2026

Reflection on the First Sunday of Lent – *Gospel: Matthew 4:1-11*

On the First Sunday of Lent, the Gospel leads us into the desert with Jesus. This is not an imaginary wilderness or a vague spiritual landscape. It is a real place: the Judaean Desert, also called the Judean Wilderness, located east of Jerusalem and stretching down toward the Dead Sea and the Jordan River. Christian tradition identifies the site of the temptations as the Mount of Temptation—Mount Quarantania—a steep hill roughly 3 km (1.9 miles) northwest of Jericho.

I had the opportunity of visiting that region some years ago. The landscape is stark and overwhelming—endless hills, sharp ridges, blinding sunlight, and an almost unsettling silence. Standing there, you feel exposed.

It was into this very wilderness that Jesus was led by the Spirit. After forty days of fasting, He was hungry. In a place covered with stones that look remarkably like small loaves of bread, the first temptation becomes palpable: "Turn these stones into bread." It sounds practical, even reasonable. Why not use divine power to satisfy a real need?

But Jesus refuses. "One does not live by bread alone." In a culture of discharge, where we are conditioned to satisfy every craving immediately—whether it be food, entertainment, or affirmation—His words challenge us. The "culture of discharge" describes a society that encourages the constant fulfilment of desires, often without pause for reflection or deeper meaning. Lent invites us to rediscover that our deepest hunger is not for comfort, but for God.

The second temptation, traditionally associated with that dramatic height overlooking Jericho, urges Jesus to throw Himself down and force God to intervene. It is the temptation to demand proof, to turn faith into a spectacle. How often do we quietly test God? **"If You are really with me, fix this. Solve that."** Jesus instead chooses trust without conditions.

Finally, standing on a hilltop, the devil offers Him all the kingdoms of the world—power without the Cross. No suffering. No rejection. Just glory. It is the temptation of shortcuts. We know it well: compromise a value, cut a corner, bow just a little to what is easier or more popular.

This is a very human scene. Jesus is tired. He is hungry. He stands in a real desert under a real sun. Yet He does not argue with clever ideas. He holds fast to the Word of God. His strength comes from trusting the Father. The Bible isn't just an old book full of words from the past; it's a living source of guidance and encouragement for us today.

When we turn to God's Word, we find wisdom for our own struggles and encouragement to remain faithful. The scriptures anchor us, helping us to resist temptation and to trust in God's loving presence, just as Jesus did in the wilderness.

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(Cont from Page 1) Lent begins in the wilderness because that is where clarity comes. When distractions fall away, we see what we truly rely on. The desert is uncomfortable—but it is honest.

As we begin these forty days, let us remember that Christ has already faced the wilderness of testing and remained faithful. Because He endured and trusted, we can be assured that He walks with us now, offering strength and companionship in the quieter deserts of our own lives. May this Lenten season become a gentle invitation to pause, reflect, and discover anew the presence of Christ beside us, even in our most barren places.

Let me leave you with a question to ponder: In what ways might Christ's presence gently transform the quieter deserts of your own heart this Lent?

Have a blessed weekend. In Christ, Deacon Hugo

The Rite of Election: Welcoming New Members to Our Parish Community

This Sunday marks a significant occasion in the life of our parish and the wider archdiocese as we celebrate the Rite of Election at St Stephen Cathedral. The Rite of Election is a crucial step for those journeying through the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA), where catechumens—those preparing for Baptism—are formally recognised by the Church and named by the Archbishop. It is a public affirmation of their commitment to the Catholic faith and a joyful moment for the entire community.

This year, our parish is blessed to have sixteen individuals participating in our RCIA programme. Among them are five catechumens who will receive the sacraments of initiation—Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist—and nine candidates who, already baptised, will complete their journey into full communion with the Catholic Church. Their dedication and willingness to explore faith are inspiring, and it is a privilege to accompany them as they grow in understanding and commitment.

On this Sunday, Our catechumens, candidates, and few of our parishioners will join others from across the archdiocese for the Rite of Election, where the Archbishop will call them by name and invite them to continue their journey towards Easter. This is a moment of grace not only for those being welcomed, but also for our parish community, as we witness the fruits of God's presence in their lives.

Let us continue to pray for our RCIA participants, supporting them in faith and friendship. May we journey with them, offering encouragement, guidance, and love as they become part of our parish family. Together, let us celebrate their courage and commitment, and welcome them with open hearts at the Easter Vigil.

LENTEN SCHEDULE

Friday, 27 Feb, 6- 6:30pm - **Station of the Cross**
Friday, 27 Feb, 6:30- 7:30pm - **Lenten Program**
Saturday, 28 Feb. 9:30-11:30am- Formation Day

Have you signed up? Why Flocknote?

Parishioners and visitors are invited to scan the QR code to sign up and register with the parish. If you have any questions, please reach out to our parish office : acaciaridge@bne.catholic.net.au

Safeguarding News

The Safeguarding Commitment for the Archdiocese of Brisbane and Our Lady of Fatima Parish is: Zero tolerance for all forms of abuse and strives to safeguard all who interact with its ministries & services. Special priority is given to the safety & wellbeing of children & adults at risk. In an emergency, please call the Police 000 or information can be provided to STOPline anonymously. Phone: 1300 304 550 Email: AOB@stopline.com.au Online: www.bnecatholic.stoplinereport.com https:// brisbane-catholic.org.au/safeguarding/safeguard/

IN GRACE FRIENDS

Join us for a Morning Tea on Thursday, 26 February, 9:30am at Parish Office/Presbytery. Bring a plate of food to share and a friend.

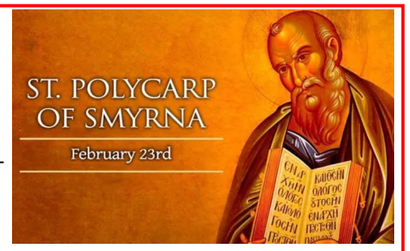
Catechism Class

Dear parents, An ongoing catechism class every Sunday during school Term for 30 minutes after the 9 am Mass at Our Lady of Fatima parish in Acacia Ridge. For more information, please contact Sr. Hanna MC. Ph: (07) 3252 4441 if interested.

Caritas AUSTRALIA — rosary.catholic.edu.au — PROJECT COMPASSION

A practical and life-giving expression of Lent is our call to generosity and sacrifice in support of those less fortunate through the Project Compassion Appeal. This is something every individual and family can take part in, with a single envelope for the whole season of Lent available at the entrance of each church.

Saint of the Week: Saint Polycarp, Bishop and Martyr

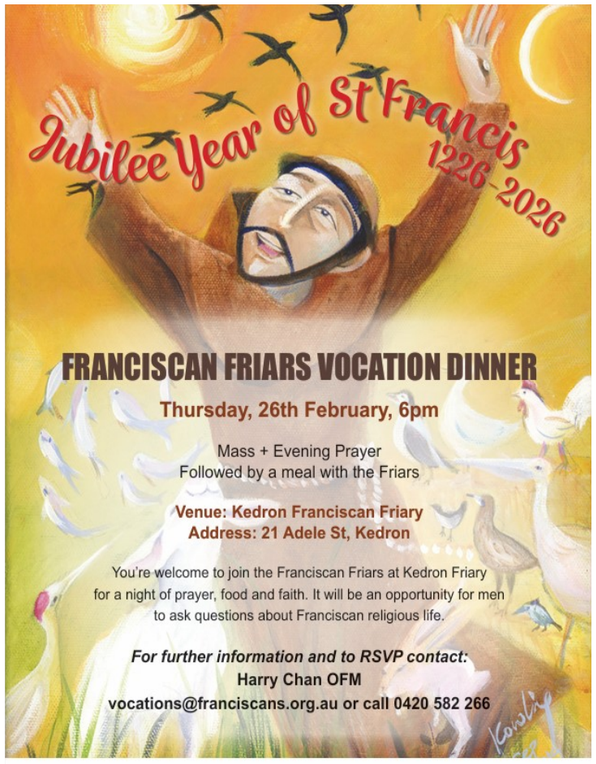


St Polycarp of Smyrna stands as one of the most revered figures in early Christian history, known for his steadfast faith, pastoral leadership, and ultimate sacrifice as a martyr. Born around AD 69, Polycarp became the bishop of Smyrna (modern-day İzmir, Turkey) and served his community for many decades during a period marked by persecution and theological debate.

Polycarp was believed to be a disciple of John the Apostle, which connected him directly to the teachings of Jesus. His role as bishop placed him at the heart of the early Church's efforts to define orthodox doctrine and maintain unity among believers. St Polycarp was renowned for his wisdom and humility.

Throughout his ministry, he worked tirelessly to support his congregation, encourage fellow Christians facing persecution, and challenge heresies that threatened the unity of the Church. He corresponded with other church leaders of his time, including Ignatius of Antioch, further solidifying his place among the early Church Fathers.

Polycarp's martyrdom is one of the earliest and most well-documented accounts outside the New Testament. In his old age, around AD 155, he was arrested during a wave of persecution against Christians. Refusing to renounce his faith or curse Christ, Polycarp was sentenced to death by burning. According to tradition, when the flames did not consume him, he was ultimately killed by the sword.

Polycarp's courage in the face of death inspired countless Christians, both in his time and for generations to come. His steadfastness became a symbol of unwavering faith and commitment to Christ, even when confronted with the threat of death.

St Polycarp's legacy endures through his writings, particularly his letter to the Philippians, which offers insight into his theological convictions and pastoral care. His feast day is on 23 February in our liturgical calendar.