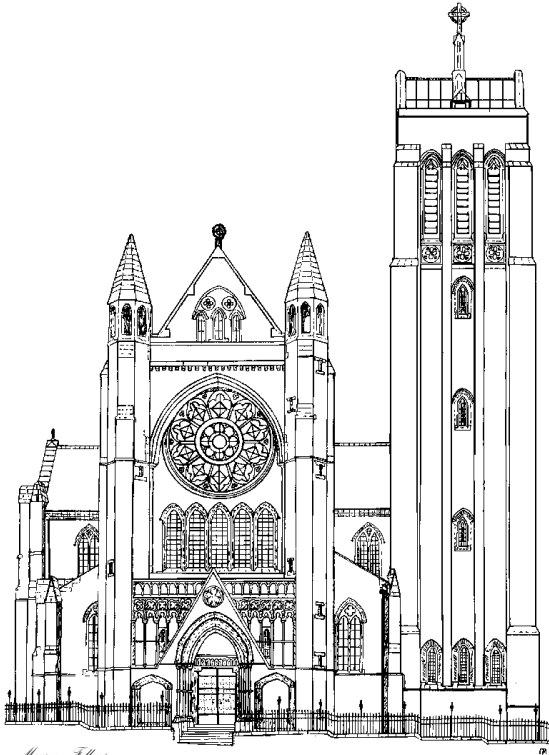




The Church of
St Alban the Martyr
Birmingham 12



ST ALBAN AND ST PATRICK PARISH MAGAZINE



February
2021
70p





Church of S Alban the Martyr
Conybere Street, Birmingham
(Traditional Anglo-Catholic)

(www.saintalban.co.uk)

Vicar: Revd Dr Gerald Sykes,

The Vicarage, 120 Stanhope Street, Birmingham B12 0XB

☎: 0121 440 0404

Sunday Services

Choral Mass 10.00 a.m. Solemn
Evening Service 6.00 p.m.

Weekday Masses *(Please note that weekday services are presently cancelled due to Covid-19.)*

Thursday 11.30 a.m. Low
Saturday 9.00 a.m. Low
Saturday 5.00 p.m. Multimedia Mass *(Term Time)*
Holy Days of Obligation 7.30 p.m. Solemn

Confessions: By appointment

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Mrs Verna Smith-Broadbent

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From The Vicarage

Dear all,

Thanks to everyone who sent us a card this Christmas.

Taking stock of where we are at the end of January, the first dose of the Covid-19 vaccine is on target to reach the most vulnerable in society by mid-February, though there will still be other vulnerable people left to vaccinate. At the time of writing the very high peak of infections in January is declining nationally but the numbers in Birmingham are dropping more slowly. All this means it's very hard to make plans. We are not open for public Mass at the moment, or more formally we have "requested that the bishop authorise dispensing with the reading of Morning and Evening Prayer as required by Canon B 11 and the celebration of the Holy Communion as required by Canon B 14 on a regular basis until March 1st 2021". The standing committee is reviewing the situation every week and we will open earlier if we can and if necessary, we will ask for the dispensation to be extended. Of course, Mass and the daily offices are still celebrated, but the church is not open to the public.

It seems likely that we will still be closed for "The presentation of Christ in the Temple" (Candlemas) and Ash Wednesday. I propose that we have a simple low Mass on both those occasions and that the services are made available on Zoom and YouTube. I have also started a Zoom Evening Prayer on 4 days a week and I am working towards having a Zoom Lent group provisionally at 7:30 pm on Tuesdays. (I am currently liaising with the Baptist church to see if they would like to join us so the time and day may change.)

I would also like us to get together on Shrove Tuesday (via Zoom) for a few pancakes. If we could put our computers in the kitchen or dining room (well away from any liquids) we could still eat pancakes together. Afterwards we could watch the second video of our family adventures in Nagaland as we visited Akole's family (we saw the first one at a Friend's meeting).

On the musical front, John and I are hoping to put together a recording of Wood in the Phrygian mode for Lent, with everyone recording their voice parts at home and sending them to me to be put together. Please keep our musicians in mind, it is hard to sing part of a choral work all on your own, and quite a bit of work to edit it all together as well.

Let us hope that by Easter that some of the most draconian limitations have gone and that we can celebrate the beginning of the end.

I have had some conversations about doing something in the week of St Alban's day. It's hard to be sure what the Covid situation is even so far into the future but we have arranged Mass for Saturday 26th June and we hope to have Fr Mark Bonny Dean of Ely preaching. I do still hope that we might manage a bit more of a celebration, or dare I say festival, in the week beforehand.

If you are not on the email list for getting information to join our Zoom and YouTube services, please email me at FrGerrySykes@gmail.com.

Fr Gerry

Provisional timetable for events on Zoom

Sundays 9:45am Mass Zoom (for 10.00 am start)

Monday – Thursday Evening prayer 6.00 pm (until Shrove Tuesday)

Shrove Tuesday 16th February 7.00 pm: Pancakes and video

Ash Wednesday 17th February: Mass Zoom starts at 7:15 pm (for 7:30 pm Mass)

Tuesdays in Lent: Study Group 7:30 pm

Wednesdays in Lent: 6.00 pm Evening Prayer

Thursdays in Lent: 6.00 pm Evening Prayer

Fridays in Lent: Stations of the Cross 6.00 pm

Lent

Fasting is important in many but not all religions: Sikhism is a notable exception. Fasting can take various forms. For example Muslims do not eat or drink during the day. Even within Christianity there are



differences, in the western Church Lent is more about abstaining from certain foods, which has become the rather insipid giving something up for Lent, the Orthodox churches observe much stricter fasts based on monastic fasting.

Fasting within Christianity has continuity with Jewish fasts, in particular as expressed by the Jew, Jesus; especially by his example of fasting for 40 days in the wilderness. While fasting has probably always been a spiritual discipline within Christianity, the idea of a fast before Easter developed gradually. Probably the original pre-Easter fast was part of the penance that new Christians went through before they were baptised on Easter day. Over time more and more Christians decided to join in this period of fasting. All we know for a fact is that a pre-Easter fast became common after Council of Nicea in

325. In the Western churches this pre-Easter fast became Lent, in the Eastern Orthodox church it is called the “Great 40 Days” (Μεγάλη Τεσσαρακοστή) or the “Great Fast” (Μεγάλη Νηστεία).

The pre-Easter fast is connected with Jesus’ fast in the wilderness for 40 days.

40 is a special number,

Moses spent 40 days with God on Mount Sinai (Exodus 24: 18),

Elijah spent 40 days and nights walking to Mount Horeb (1 Kings 19: 8),

God sent 40 days and nights of rain in the great flood of Noah (Genesis 7: 4),

The Hebrew people wandered 40 years in the desert (Numbers 14: 33).

Jonah’s prophecy of judgment gave the city of Ninevah 40 days to repent or be destroyed (Jonah 3: 4),

Jesus fasted for 40 days in the wilderness, where he was tempted by the devil (Matthew 4: 1 – 2, Mark 1: 12 – 13, Luke 4: 1 – 2,

There is a tradition that Jesus spent 40 hours in the tomb.

While Lent is a 40 day fast, not all

churches do it in the same way. Most Orthodox churches fast for 40 days straight including Sundays so their fast starts on Clean Monday (not a Wednesday). In the Western church Lent is 46 days long, but if the 6 Sundays of Lent are not fast days that comes to 40 days of fasting.

Today many Christians prefer to take something up, rather than give something up, for Lent. Traditionally we did both, fasting and studying the faith as well as spending more time in prayer. This year I hope that you will join me in a study

group on Tuesdays in Lent. One of the reasons that I haven't run a Lent course in the past 3 years is that we are a gathered congregation with many of us traveling a long distance to get to St Alban's. Now that we are used to using Zoom, distance is no longer a problem.

Lent will undoubtedly especially be difficult this year, so let us make it a time to draw comfort and strength for God as we journey with Jesus through the wilderness to the cross and the resurrection hope.

Fr Gerry

In The Bleak Midwinter

The last week in January provided enough wintry weather to encourage Fr Gerry to take this collection of pictures.



The Heart of the Parish



The West Front



Welcome to Narnia...



...to all our visitors

The Church's Year — February

WE begin this month with one of the greatest of all Christian festivals, the Feast of Candlemas, on Tuesday February 2nd. This is the 40th day after Christmas and it was on this day that, in accordance with Jewish custom, Mary and Joseph brought the infant Jesus to the temple in Jerusalem, as their first-born, to 'present' him to God, hence the formal title of this feast, The Presentation of Christ in the



Temple. It was only two elderly people, Simeon (the implication is that he was an old man) and Anna, a widow in her eighties, who recognised Jesus for what he was. Simeon, in the Canticle known to us as the Nunc Dimittis (from its opening Latin words — literally, Now you are dismissing — or allowing to leave), hails Jesus as 'A light to lighten the Gentiles', and for this reason the light of Jesus is represented by candles at this service, often in a procession, hence the other title of this Feast as Candlemas. This is a beautiful ceremony, reminding us also of the increasingly lengthening days — as the daylight grows in length and intensity, so may Christ's light constantly guide us throughout this year, whatever it may bring. At S Alban's, for years now, we have administered the wondrous Blessing of S Blasius at the end of the service, which we usually celebrate in the evening

of this day. S Blasius' Day is the following day, February 3rd, but it is permitted to administer his blessing on the Eve of his day, i.e. on February 2nd. S Blasius is the patron saint of sore throats! and the blessing has customarily been administered with the traditional Latin formula over the head of each person who comes forward, with two candles placed under his or her throat — and you will be given a slip of paper as you leave with the Latin blessing



on it with an English translation. If we are able to celebrate Candlemas in S Alban's on this day — please check beforehand — do come and also receive this wonderful blessing, which I first came across in my student days in Heidelberg.

We might notice that the following Saturday, February 6th, marks the 69th anniversary of her Most Gracious and Excellent Sovereign Majesty, our dear Queen Elizabeth! Only one year to go before an amazing 70th anniversary, which would be unique in British history. Let us continue to pray for her health and also for that of Prince Philip, who, we hope, will be able to celebrate his 100th birthday in this year. I can't resist pointing out that Richard Dawkins, in his *The God Delusion*, quotes Francis Galton, a cousin of Charles Darwin, who said that if prayer is effective for other people, then the royal family, who get prayed for virtually every day, should be unusually fit and healthy, compared with other people — Dawkins uses this as an argument against the effectiveness

of prayer, but of course his argument backfires in the case of our royal family who really are remarkably fit and healthy — both the Queen and her husband — compared with many people of the same age. Long may she (further) reign!

Nor can I resist, once again, a mention of S Scholastica's Day on Wednesday February 10th. The saint herself was a sister of the famous S Benedict, the founder of the Benedictine Order, and was renowned for her piety and charity. She is also involved against storms, which means she would probably have been



horrified by the riots in Oxford that broke out on this day in 1355 when two students complained about the quality of wine in the Swindlestock Tavern in the centre of Oxford. That led to a fight between 'town and gown' in which several people were killed and to an exodus of many students to the, they hoped, more peaceful city of Cambridge. I spent many a merry hour in various taverns (alas! the Swindlestock has disappeared — one would have thought its history would have ensured its survival) in that part of Oxford in my student days, without, I am glad to say, any riot following.

However, all drinking would have to cease a week later — if that is one of the things we 'give up' for Lent — on Wednesday February 17th, Ash



Wednesday, and the solemn first day of the Holy Season of Lent. This marks the forty weekdays (between Monday and Saturday) between Ash Wednesday and Easter Eve (reckoning inclusively), which are observed in commemoration of Christ's forty days of fasting and temptations in the wilderness, in preparation for his ministry. Let's make the most of this holy season, perhaps by gaining a deeper knowledge of the Bible (now, perhaps, is the time to learn by heart the titles of all the books of the Old and New Testaments in the right order, so that we can quickly find our way around the scriptures). The more seriously we take Lent, the more we shall be able to rejoice on the Day of the Resurrection of Jesus, Easter Day, which is on April 4th — the resurrection being the foundation of the Christian faith.

Saturday, February 27th, is the day on which the Church remembers one of the greatest of all our Christian poets, George Herbert, many of whose poems are also sung as hymns today. A reading of some of his poems could also profitably form part of our Lenten reading during this season. Thus, we shall be spiritually preparing ourselves for the month of March, all of which this year falls within the season of Lent. And may the assurance, kindly given to us (among so many) by our gracious government, that everything will have returned to normality by Easter, be fulfilled!

Fr Andrew

Charlotte Ratcliff and her Notes on the Pollocks

During January, I finished transcribing two books of notes about the Pollock Brothers written by Charlotte Ratcliff. These are in the collection of material from our parish deposited in the Birmingham Library Archives as MS/1285/1/217 and MS/1285/1/225. Here is a sample of Mrs Ratcliff's writing:

close to that of the Pollocks in Moseley churchyard.

These notes may have been written in response to Francis Underhill's appeal in 1914 for information from the congregation for a life of the Pollock Brothers that he was planning to write, or they may be a little earlier. Mrs Ratcliff

often wrote with little punctuation almost as a "stream of consciousness" and made great use of ampersand as a connective. I have regularised her punctuation and in places her spelling in the following extracts.

Once, coming along Agmore St. ^{Mrs. James Pollock} saw a poor & old woman looking very sad & she stopped her & spoke, she said, so kindly to her & said, "You look so sad, how you lost anything?" & she said "Yes Sir I am, I've lost my home, you see they've moved the home from Agmore Lane in to Congre St and it is not like home I've been a many years in Agmore Lane & I can't get it like home" when she said all this they were standing

With her husband, brass foundry proprietor Howard Taylor Ratcliff, Charlotte was among the most important friends and supporters of the Pollock Brother's Mission. Howard (for 25 years Churchwarden of St Alban's) tragically died in 1909, run down by a brewer's lorry in Llandudno, and Charlotte died ten years later in 1919, survived by seven of her nine children. A substantial plaque in the ambulatory below the window of the Crucifixion commemorates her son Henry Alban who died in 1888, while the first Station of the Cross commemorates her husband Howard and the tenth her daughter Marianne Elizabeth who died in 1910. Charlotte herself is commemorated by a plaque on the panelling behind the Lady Chapel Altar, and her grave is

James Pollock's Hopes for a Parish Room

'One, I think, of the greatest desires of Mr Pollock's heart was that a great Parish room should be built on the ground where S. Katharine's now stands. He longed more & more for it & sometimes he would have such a flood of fervent desire that he could almost see it. He said once, indeed many, many times, words like these "Then my people could meet & know each other & talk without sin & you & they could say what they long to say & are losers by not saying & every evening after evensong on Sunday, all who could, would go into the Parish Room, & talk & draw nearer to each other, & we would have classrooms round it, every arrangement for workers who needed rest or refreshment to be able

to get it, & the entrance to it should be through a door in the north aisle opposite the door we now come in at & no one should get wet when the weather was bad, for we would have Cloisters to lead to it & there should be arrangement for concerts and little plays & sales of work and business meetings!!”

This passage deserves a few notes in explanation:

St Katharine’s was an iron chapel, given by the Pollocks in 1890 as a thank offering for the 25th anniversary of their mission, and stood on Stanhope Street where the Vicarage is now.

Other notes make it clear that Fr James Pollock was very insistent that there must be no conversation whatever in church, before or after services. Very reluctantly he allowed a minimum of essential communication on urgent parish matters after the service when this was unavoidable, but no social conversation.

“The door we now come in at” refers to the south entrance through the base of the tower from Conybere Street. This was in regular use as the main entrance until the 1980s, but the choice of words (that of the narrator rather than actual words of Fr James Pollock) suggests that this was a recent innovation at the time of writing. This may indicate that the west entrance from Stanhope Street was in normal use as the main entrance until 1907, when the west porch was converted into a mortuary chapel as a resting place for coffins before funerals and also for use by the Guild of All Souls.

At the time the notes were written those we might call “church volunteers” were known as “parish workers” and it is not clear whether it is for these or the working

population of the parish that rest and refreshment were to be provided.

Bishop Gerard Trower Recalls the Strange Interview for His First Curacy

“When Bishop Trower came as Mr Trower to interview Mr Pollock for the first time with regard to coming to S. Albans, he said all his friends warned him against coming to take up work in Birmingham or anywhere near it & said it was all smoke & dirt & sham jewellery &c. & advised him to keep clear of it. But he came & lunched with the Brothers, having been struck at once by the wonderful appearance & bearing of them both; & they conversed of all the topics of the day but not a word was said about the object for which he had come to see them. Lunch ended, after sitting talking on a little longer, Mr Pollock said “well do you think you would like to see the Church & walk round the parish?” They started forth & Mr Pollock showed him everything: Church, Schools, Parish, & everything, as he only could. And still he never said one word about his coming to S. Albans & Mr Trower said he wondered whether he would say anything at all. At last when they had seen everything Mr Pollock said “I will walk with you to the station” & he did and saw him into his train. And then just before the train started, M Pollock said, “After all you have just seen do you think you would like to come & work in Birmingham?” and the train went off!! And Bishop Trower, who told this at a meeting in S. Columba’s when he came to visit us as Bishop Trower, said against all the arguments of all his friends & of anybody & everybody, the marvellous personalities of those two wonderful Brothers attracted

him so irresistibly he could do nothing but come; and he had never for one moment regretted it! Mr Arthur Dixon was present & heard Bishop Trower tell this & said he thought he had never laughed so much at any religious meeting he had ever been to.'

St Columba's was the name given to the previous St Alban's Church on the corner of Dymoke Street and Leopold Street after the present St Alban's Church was opened. It remained in use as a Mission Chapel and school room until the Schools were rebuilt in 1914.

Fr James Pollock Encounters a New Resident of the Alms Houses

'Once, coming along Dymoke Street, Mr James Pollock saw a poor & old woman looking very sad & he stopped her & spoke, (she said), so kindly to her & said, "You look sorrowful, have you lost anything?" & she said "Yes sir I 'ave, I've lost my home. You see, they've moved the Alms House from Steelhouse Lane into Conybere Street and it isn't like home. I've been a many years in Steelhouse Lane & I can't feel it like home here." When she said all this they were standing in Dymoke Street close to S. Columba's &, she said, Mr Pollock stretched out his hand & pointed to S. Albans & said "There's your home, make that your home. There is always a place for you & always a welcome there, come to it every day; come morning, come at night, choose a special place for yourself in it, if you like, & come early & you will always be able to get it. Come Sundays & come weekdays till it is more home than that home you have lost." &

she said, "& I did, and it is more home to me than any home I ever had before, & it is like Heaven too, & I shall never forget his face when he said it. I have seen some beautiful faces in my day; but never one like his looked that day!" And that poor woman did choose a place for her own & always weekday & Sundays she was to be seen in it, till a few weeks before her death, when her last illness came to her. I may have written this down in the other book but the remembrance of it all has come to me with such vivid clearness this morning I have written it down lest I should have left out any of the beautifulness of it in the other.'

The Lench's Trust alms houses on Conybere Street were built in 1879, just before the present St Alban's Church. As St Basil's Conybere Gardens, they now provide supported accommodation for young people.

The Dangers of Reading While Walking in Winter

'He [James Pollock] used to have a habit of reading as he was walking along, even along the town streets, till a curious thing happened. (He told me this himself.) There was frozen snow on the ground, & slides here & there. He had just bought a tract called "The Shortest Road to Glory" & was reading it as he walked down Suffolk Street, when he must have stepped on a slide or slipping place, & he slipped down full length on his back. "After that" he said, "I gave up reading in the street.'"

*Chris Smith
January 2021*

Lesser Known Saints

Saint Brigid

From time to time you will find that the calendar in this magazine contains some of the lesser-known saints, and this month we include Saint Brigid on February 1st and Saint Teilo on February 9th.

The name of Saint Brigid appears to have a variety of spellings, including Brigit, Bridget or Bride. Although little is known of her life other than through legend and folklore, she is said to have been born in Ireland of a noble father and a slave mother, and she was sold along with her mother to a Druid, whom she later converted to Christianity. On being set free, she returned to her father, who tried to marry her to the king of Ulster.

Impressed by her piety, the king removed her from parental control. The Curragh, a flat open plain of about 5,000 acres of common land, was supposedly granted by the king of Leinster to S Brigid.

At Kildare she founded the first nunnery in Ireland. The community became a double abbey for monks and nuns, the abbess ranking above the abbot. Her friend S Conleth became bishop of her people, and she is said to have been active in founding other communities of nuns.

S Brigid appears in several works of literature, the Book of Lismore, the Breviarium Aberdonense, and Bethada Náem n-Érenn. One of the loveliest and most gently profound legends of Brigid is the story of Dara, the blind nun, for the restoration of whose sight Brigid prayed. When the miracle was granted, Dara realized that the clarity of sight blurred God in the eye of the soul, whereupon



she asked Brigid to return her to the beauty of darkness.

Brigid is also said to have miraculously changed water into beer for a leper colony and provided enough beer for 18 churches from a single barrel; she is sometimes considered to be one of the patron saints of beer.

S Brigid's feast day is observed as far away from Ireland as Australia and New Zealand. In early times she was celebrated in parts of Scotland and England converted by Celtic churchmen. The Church of S Bride's, Fleet Street, London, is dedicated to her.

She died c 525 at Kildare, Ireland. Known as virgin and abbess of Kildare, she is one of the patron saints of Ireland.

Saint Teilo

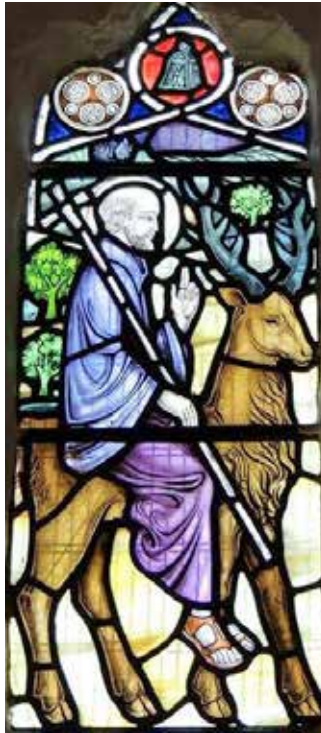
Saint Teilot was born at Penalun around the year 500. There is a possibility that he may have been the grandson of Ceredig and thus a member of the royal family of Gwynedd, later considered Saint David among its members.

Teilo was educated by the renowned Church leader Dubricius, and then at the school at Winndi-Lantquendi (Whitland) where he met and became a close companion of Saint David.

They both appear to have had experience in battle. At Mynyw (Saint Davids), Saint David founded his abbey, ousted an Irish pirate named Bwya, killed his cattle and burnt his fortress to the ground. He succeeded Dubricius as Bishop of Llandaff. Teilo founded the first church in Llandaff, headed a monastic school, and became bishop over Glywysing and Gwent.

In the 540s yellow plague, probably the Justinian plague, affected Britain. In 549 Teilo, with a small group of monks, moved to Dol in Brittany. He is reported to have stayed in Brittany for seven years and seven months. They travelled through Dumnonia and were reported to have received the confession of King Geraint and joined Samson of Dol at Dol. To this day the fruit groves they planted are known as the groves of Teilo and Samson.

There is a legend that Teilo was asked by Budic II of Brittany to subdue a belligerent



winged dragon, which he tamed and tied to a rock in the sea off Brittany.

He returned to Llandeilo Fawr and died there on February 9th around 560. He became one of the most venerated men in Wales. At his death Teilo's body was said to have miraculously become three identical bodies, probably because his relics were claimed by three churches, Llandaff Cathedral, Llandeilo Fawr, and Penally Abbey. One tomb lies to the right of the altar of Llandaff Cathedral: his skull is kept in the south chapel in a reliquary, which was in the possession of the Mathew family from 1480 to 1658 after Sir

David Mathew restored S Teilo's shrine in Llandaff Cathedral, which was desecrated by pirates. It was gifted by Bishop Marshall. It is stated that many miracles were witnessed there while he was alive and also later at his tomb. Relics are now even more widely distributed, being venerated at Landeleau, and Plogonnet (Finistère), and Saint-Thélo (Côtes-du-Nord).

At least 25 churches and schools in Wales, Brittany, and Cornwall and Devon are dedicated to him, including S Teilo's Church in Wales High School, Cardiff, while there are three villages in Brittany named Landeleau, Landêliau and Saint-Thélo after him.

Saint Teilo is the Patron Saint of the city of Cardiff. He is not infrequently represented, as in many Breton churches, riding a stag.

E.J.F.

Mary Goodman 1918 – 2021



It is with great regret that we mark the passing of our longest serving member of the church, who died on January 31st, just one month after her 102nd birthday, and coincidentally, on the anniversary of the death of her father 69 years ago.

All of you have known Mary for much longer than me: we will have a proper obituary for her next month, but I wanted to write a few words for this edition. Mary's smile and good humour made our family move to Birmingham easier at a very stressful time. When we first came Mary was still able to drive to St Alban's and come up to the altar rail to take communion.

Alas, Mary got frailer and with her usual good sense decided that it was not a good idea to drive any more, and so she became dependant on lifts — always in good humour. We all had a shock when Mary went into hospital, but she pulled through with her usual determination. When Mary was less able to venture out it was always a pleasure to visit her. Once Covid-19 became rampant, Mary and I had many 'phone conversations and I know that many of you were also in contact with her through the 'phone.

I only knew Mary after she had stepped down from her many rôles in church, but I know that you and I want to thank God for Mary's influence on our lives and our church.

Fr Gerry

Calendar for February 2021

Date	Feast	
1 st Monday	S Brigid	
2 nd Tuesday	The Presentation of the Lord	
3 rd Wednesday	S Blaise B Mr	
4 th Thursday	Feria	
5 th Friday	S Agatha V Mr	
6 th Saturday	S Paul Miki and Companions Mrr	
7th Sunday	The Fifth Sunday of the Year	Parish of Highgate
8 th Monday	S Jerome Emiliani Pr	
9 th Tuesday	S Teilo	
10 th Wednesday	S Scholastica V	
11 th Thursday	Our Lady of Lourdes	
12 th Friday	Feria	
13 th Saturday	Our Lady on Saturday	
14th Sunday	The Sixth Sunday of the Year	Parish of Highgate
15 th Monday	Feria	
16 th Tuesday	Feria	
17th Wednesday	Ash Wednesday	
18 th Thursday	Thursday after Ash Wednesday	
19 th Friday	Friday after Ash Wednesday	
20 th Saturday	Saturday after Ash Wednesday	
21st Sunday	The First Sunday in Lent	Parish of Highgate
22 nd Monday	The Chair of Saint Peter, Apostle	
23 rd Tuesday	S Polycarp B Mr	
24 th Wednesday	Feria	
25 th Thursday	Feria	
26 th Friday	Feria	
27 th Saturday	Feria	
28th Sunday	The Second Sunday in Lent	Parish of Highgate

Note: The daily Mass readings can be found at: <http://universalis.com/mass.htm>

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