



Catholic Parish of Whanganui

First Sunday of Lent

22 February 2026



THIS WEEK'S CALENDAR

Monday 23 February

9.00am C/s Holy Family

Tuesday 24 February

9.30am Mass Holy Family

12.05pm Mass St Mary's

Wednesday 25 February

12.05pm Mass St Mary's

Thursday 26 February

12.05pm Mass St Mary's

Friday 27 February

10.30am No Cullinane

11.20am Rite I St Mary's

12.05pm Mass St Mary's

**5.30pm Stations of the Cross
St Mary's**

Saturday 28 February

9.00am Rite I St Mary's

9.30am Mass St Mary's

5.30pm Sun Vigil Mass
Holy Family

Sunday 1 March

9.30am Mass St Mary's

11.00pm Mass Kaiwhaiki

5.30pm Mass St Mary's

UPCOMING DATES

Older Children Baptism

10 March

St Mary's Church

Chrism Mass 31 March

The Cathedral Palmerston North

PARISH CONTACT DETAILS

Parish Office

Jo Boulton 06 345 3872

admin@cpow.co.nz

Parish Priest

Fr Craig Butler 021 272 4401

Assistant Priest

Fr John Roberts 027 634 6877

Hospital Chaplain

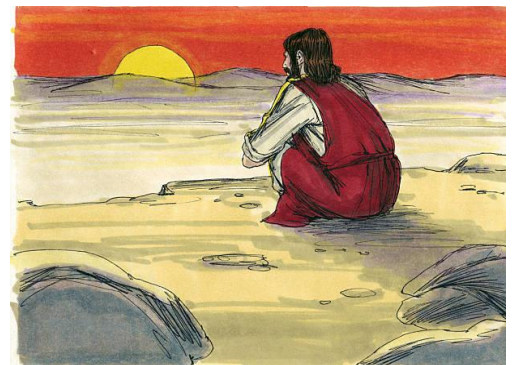
Norma O'Connor 027 233 4557

Youth Minister

Rain Shore 021 256 0608

BLESSED BY GOD - EVEN WHEN WE DON'T FEEL IT

Faith tells us that what ultimately defines us is that we are created in the image and likeness of God. We are God's blessed ones, special to God. Deep down, whether we admit it or not, we each nurse the secret of being special. And this is not just ego or narcissism but an imprint inside our very souls. Imprinted in the core of our being is the sense that we are not just accidental collections of dust, destined to flicker for an instant and then disappear forever. We know we are much more. It is not easy to live out our blessed, special status when, most of the time, everything around us says the opposite. As much as we experience ourselves as special, we also experience emptiness, anonymity, and ordinariness. It is easy, in the end, to believe that we aren't special at all. But, while over-inflated egos do cause their share of heartaches, it is an unhealthy temptation to believe that we are not blessed, simply because life finds us one-among-six-billion-others, struggling, and seemingly not special in any way. Faith tells the true story: we are, all of us, made in God's image and likeness, blessed, and special. However, we don't always believe it. Life and circumstance often tire us in ways that tempt us to believe its opposite. It happened to Jesus. He too was tempted, and there was a particular prelude to his vulnerability. At his baptism, he heard his Father say: "you are my blessed son, in whom I take delight!". Immediately after this, we're told, the spirit drove him into the desert where he fasted for forty days and forty nights, and afterwards "he was hungry." What scripture is describing here is not simply physical hunger. Jesus was empty in ways that made him vulnerable to the belief that he was not



God's blessed child. The following were his three temptations: The devil began tempting him, saying: "If you are God's specially blessed one, turn these stones into bread." In essence, the devil's taunt was this: "If you believe that you are God's specially blessed creature, why is your life so empty?" Jesus' reply, "One doesn't live on bread alone!" might be put this way: I can be empty and still be God's blessed one! Being blessed and special is not dependent upon how full or empty my life is at a given moment! The second temptation has to do with human glory and its absence. The devil shows Jesus all the kingdoms of the world and says: "All of these will be yours if you worship me!" In other words, if you're God's blessed one, how come you're a big, fat nobody? Not famous, unknown, anonymous. And Jesus' reply might be worded this way: I can be a big nobody and still be God's blessed one. Blessedness doesn't depend upon fame. The third temptation is similar: The devil takes Jesus to the top of the temple and challenges him to throw himself down to make God catch him. Jesus responds that we shouldn't put God to the test. In essence, what Jesus says when the devil challenges him to throw himself off the top of the temple to prove his specialness is this: I'll take the stairs down, just like everyone else! Our blessedness is not predicated on having any special privileges that set us apart from others. We are God's blessed ones, even when we find ourselves riding the city buses. It's important to remember that we are God's special, blessed sons and daughters, even when our lives seem empty, anonymous, and devoid of any special privileges because then we won't forever be putting God and our restless hearts to the test, demanding more than ordinary life can give us. Adapted from an article by Ronald Rolheiser

OLDER CHILDREN'S BAPTISM We will begin a programme of preparation for the baptism of school age children in March. Many parents want their children to choose whether they are baptised, so some years ago, we created a programme for children and their parents to learn about this sacrament. The programme starts Tuesday 10th March at St Mary's Church.

LENTEN RESOURCES Small Group resources include Crux Reflection Groups - Ascension Press and the Caritas Small Group programme. Individual books include Quantum Grace by Judy Cannato, Daily Reflections for Lent by Mark Villano, The little Black Book by Ken Untener, Sacred Space for Lent - Irish Jesuits. If you have already signed up you will be contracted this weekend.

BEHOLD LENTEN COMPANION | First Week of Lent

Behold – Standing Before Christ in Truth In the wilderness, Jesus entrusts Himself fully to the Father. Freedom begins with trust. The Behold Lenten Companion invites you this week to stand before Christ as you are and allow His Word to sustain you. Each day offers Scripture, a short reflection, prayer, and one simple action.

Journey daily. Behold Christ in the desert. Find this week's reflection at <https://tumanako.pndiocese.org.nz/wp-content/uploads/2026/02/Behold-2026-First-Week-of-Lent.pdf>

FORTY DAYS & FORTY NIGHTS Growing in maturity of Faith accompanied by Food For Faith through Lent with daily reflections at www.foodforfaith.org.nz

ASHES OF HOPE | Caritas Lent Webinar Series Journey through lent with New Zealand's Catholic Bishops and others of the faith as they guide us in prayer and reflection on each Sunday's Gospel. Wednesdays in lent, 7:30pm to 8:30pm. Visit www.caritas.org.nz/lent-webinars to register.

THURSDAY MORNINGS Come, pray & reflect on Sunday's scriptures following the Lectio Devina style. Every Thursday morning at St Mary's, 7am, for one hour. Wake up coffee included. Contact Helen Dougherty (027 413 6273) or Kate Lynch (027 2430430) if you require further information.

CHRISM MASS | Save the Date This year's Chrism Mass will be held on Tuesday 31 March, 12:05pm at the Cathedral of the Holy Spirit. Everyone is welcome.

PRE-MARRIAGE COURSE Are you thinking of getting married? Are you engaged to be married? Do you have a child or grandchild considering marriage? The Alpha Pre-Marriage course is coming to town. This Christian based course is available to all couples, whether they are being married in the church or somewhere else. It is designed to provide the tools for a robust, long-lasting and happy marriage. A great investment opportunity! Five weekly sessions beginning Monday 2nd June. Hosted by Gerard & Kate Lynch. Please book at the Parish Office.

LEGION OF MARY- religious items are free for you to take on the table in the church foyer.

THE VINNIES SHOP The shop has been closed due to a pressure reducing valve in the water line malfunctioning. This resulted in extensive water damage to our premises. Please keep us in your prayers as we work with the insurance company to get operational again. This may take some time. Thank you. The Vinnies Team.



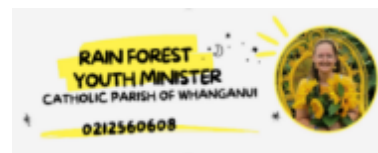
BOOKLET The Community Groups, Outreach & Programmes booklet is due for a reprint. This is a good time for an update also. Please contact Kate Lynch (gaktlynch@gmail.com or 027 2430430) if your group's details need updating; you are a new group that needs adding; or your group has 'retired' and needs deleting. Thank You

HOMELESS HUB OUTREACH – The Summer roster for next week is Jo Smilies's team. For further information contact Maureen 027 491 2168 or Pat 227 491 9637

JUNIOR YOUTH GROUP – If you are year 5-8. Come along at 10.30-12.30am on a Sunday at Saint Mary's Church Hall.

SENIOR YOUTH GROUP – If you're year 9-13 come along on a Sunday night 6.30-8.30pm Saint Mary's Church Hall.
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YOUNG ADULTS GROUP Our meetings are on Thursdays 7-9pm.
8 Glasgow Street Whanganui



RECENTLY DECEASED: Kevin Schimanski, Pam Oulaghan, Patricia Condon, Elizabeth Young, Fr Joe O'Sullivan, Lorna Sorensen, Twinkle Moonsam, Hera Peina, Eileen Seconi, Luise Mathijssen

FEBRUARY ANNIVERSARIES Shirley Bierman, Bernie Gudsell, Mary Gudsell, Tricia Moriarty, Anne Connors, Maria Watts, Maitland Watts, Nigel Watts, Anne Wham, Ellen Connors, Stan Connors, Joseph Boland, David Haddock

TODAY'S READINGS First: Genesis 2.7-9, 16-18,2-5;3.1-7 Sec: Romans 5.12-19 Gospel: Matthew 4.1-11

NEXT SUNDAY 1 March First: Genesis 12.1-4, 16-18,2-5;3.1-7 Sec: 2 Timothy 1.8b-10 Gospel: Matthew 17.1-9