

The Solemnity (in Farnham) of St Polycarp 23rd February 2026:

St Polycarp was a disciple of St John the Apostle and Evangelist. He was faced with the challenge of how to faithfully hand on the gospel once the Apostles had died. All he could do, was to live like Jesus did and so prove his authenticity. Polycarp did not seek Martyrdom, but knew that as a Bishop, it would find him. He was 86 when he died, and those ordered to arrest him, struggled to understand why this holy and generous man was such a threat. The Proconsul offered him a way out, but Polycarp refused to recant his faith: *"If you imagine that I will swear by Caesar, you do not know who I am. Let me tell you plainly, I am a Christian."* The proconsul said he would be burned alive, but Polycarp knew this hour's fire was better than eternal hell fire.

Monday in 1st Week of Lent – 23rd February 2026:

A few days ago, we placed ashes on our foreheads signifying our intention to seek conversion and repentance. The website of the United States Bishops Conference, therefore, have some excellent and varied examinations of conscience that help us make a good and thorough confession this Lent. These examinations use the Ten Commandments, the Six Precepts, the Corporal and Spiritual Works of Mercy, Catholic School Teaching – for Adults, for Children, for Married and single persons. Just put *'Examination of Conscience'* into your Internet Search Engine.

Tuesday in 1st Week of Lent – 24th February 2026:

We have entered the arid season of Lent, a sombre time to help us empty ourselves of anything that distracts us from flourishing in the spiritual life. God's Word proclaimed to us should not return to Him empty and barren but should grow in us and within the community of faith. Without prayer, the fruitfulness of our mission is impeded. As the gospel says, only a few words are needed, and instead, we need to spend time in quiet contemplation of what God is asking for us, and we need to be open to change.

Wednesday in 1st Week of Lent – 25th February 2026:

A homily should be good news but should also teach some aspect of the Catholic faith and should also challenge us or make us a little uncomfortable, so we do not take our spiritual life for granted. When we hear God's Word preached to us, it should motivate us to conversion and repentance and to a deep desire to receive the forgiveness and mercy of God who loves us and wish to see us live in accord with our great dignity.

Thursday in 1st Week of Lent – 26th February 2026:

One of the Lenten Pillars is Prayer. *'Ask and it will be given you; knock and the door shall be opened; seek and you shall find'*. God wishes to give us everything we need for our pilgrimage home; but perhaps we are asking for the wrong things, as there is a wide gap between what we want and what we need! Possibly, our first prayer should be to ask that *'Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.'* This Lent, our prayer is radical, for we are asking the Lord grants us a share in his passion, and in doing so, we are promised that we will pass-over with him from death into life. We pray also that this share in the cross will be manageable, that we will have all the grace necessary to endure, as well as help others to pick up their own cross and follow the Lord.

Friday in 1st Week of Lent – 27th February 2026:

If our communion with our neighbour is fractured, we should try and make amends before we come to Mass and Holy Communion. Peace with God (our righteousness) is achieved by Christ on the Cross, and so, the *'sign of peace'* we exchange at Mass is not a sign of how much we like and respect each, but a sign of Christ's peace first shared with the Apostles on Easter Day, the reassurance that humanity's long-awaited reconciliation with the Father has been accomplished. Last weekend, bishops around the world welcomed thousands of people wishing to be Baptised or Received into Full Communion with the Catholic Church, having come to a realisation that their lives are incomplete without the fulness of Christ's peace found in the Eucharist. As their formation draws to a close, they must learn to put the gospel into practice in their lives, so that we all may be a beacon of holiness that is attractive to others. Our Lenten penances will help keep our faith authentic, inspiring many others to join us.

Saturday in 1st Week of Lent – 28th February 2026:

We occasionally tell ourselves little lies to make us feel better, especially when we have not made the kind of spiritual progress we were hoping for. We might say, *'I'm not perfect, I'm only human after all!'* This is not a genuine recognition of weakness, but a sign we are tempted to give up! It is a tendency of a wounded humanity that settles for the hardships of this world, rather than setting our sights on heaven. Jesus says, *'be perfect, just as your Heavenly Father is perfect'*, and he believes it is possible, for the *'perfection'* means to be brought to our fulness, meaning there is nothing left to do. For humanity, our perfection is the fulness of relationship with God.