

Monday in 6th Week in Ordinary Time (II) – 16th February 2026:

St James-the-less was the first bishop of the Jerusalem Church, and likely a cousin of Jesus. He writes to the twelve tribes in the Diaspora. This originally meant those from the twelve tribes of Israel living outside Palestine. By writing to the Church, he says Christians are part of the twelve tribes of the new Israel of which the Apostles are the twelve foundation stones, helping us see the pivotal role of bishops in the Church. It is likely that James' audience are largely Jews who have become Christians. He tells them to 'rejoice', for this is the disposition of the redeemed, wanting them to understand the value of suffering, that despite their trials they should be joyful because they know the reward of eternal life promised those who endure with God to the end.

Opt. mem: The Seven Holy Founders of the Servites – Tues. 17th Feb. 2026:

In 13th Century, seven wealthy men, Buonfiglio Monaldo, Benedict dell' Antella, Bartholomew Amidei, Ricovero Ugucione, Gerardino Sostegni, John Buonagiunta and Alexis Falconieri whilst meditating on Christ's passion and Our Lady's seven sorrows, received a Marian appearance, requesting them to establish an order, dedicated to practicing and promoting the devotion to her sorrows. They left their comfortable homes, putting aside their finery and went to live together in a poor, humble building. They came to Florence to honour Mary, the Mother of God, meaning they came to be called the "*Friar Servants of Mary*,". They preached throughout Tuscany, and this penitential lifestyle attracted many visitors. As more people joined, a new religious order took root, which was later approved by the Holy See in 1304.

Ash Wednesday and the Beginning of the Lenten Fast – 18th Feb. 2026:

Like Joel did, the Church proclaims the annual fast so we may never forget that it is by Christ's Death and Resurrection that we have been set free from sin and death. We prepare for Easter by using the three pillars of *prayer, fasting and almsgiving*. Prayer is a conversation with 'Our Father' in heaven, listening to his Word and discerning his Will for our life, with a priority on service of God, His Church and People, especially those in need. Fasting is a preparation for 'The Feast' to come, a self-denial that better enables us to accept the gifts God offers us, an acceptance of the promise that our sadness will give way to eternal joy. Almsgiving recognises that my life (compared to many others) is rich in blessing, and that I can play my part ensuring that these others (who are my brothers and sisters in Christ) can realise their inheritance.

Thursday after Ash Wednesday – 19th February 2026:

Our Lenten penances are part of the journey that we call the ‘way of the cross’. Lent is quite literally a matter of life or death. Today, we renew our choice for life over death. This season we renew our relationship with God. Whatever we have opted to do to during this sacred time should be a process that moves us away from death – anything that is self-serving, narrow, biased and comfortable, moving us to life – all those actions and attitudes that lead us to compassion, concern for others, service and dedication to the Gospel. This is why Lent can be a difficult season, because it is a commitment to living a life that is radically different to what is so often lived out – out there in the world. In picking up our cross, we proclaim a message of hope; that there’s an alternative to greed, violence and cynicism – attitudes that choke the fragile growth of God’s people. We know that only Jesus Christ is *‘the way, the truth and the life’*.

Friday after Ash Wednesday – 20th February 2026:

Many people set out, with great sincerity, to fast in Lent, and often start out with great fervour. By this coming Sunday, some people will already have *‘crashed and burned’*. Maybe, then, we need to re-think our fasting, which is meant to be an act of love which helps deepen my relationship with God and not simply a test of endurance. The risk of big gestures is that they can really be a statement about me – *‘look what I am doing’*. That is a blowing of my own trumpet, rather than announcing the good news to the oppressed, hungry and homeless poor. Fasting without almsgiving forgets that we are part of the body of Christ and that the *‘corporal works of mercy’* are an integral part of the Christian life. Additionally, on all Fridays, as the *‘body of Christ’*, we observe the Friday Abstinence, a collective act of penance, as a sign of witness to the world.

Saturday after Ash Wednesday – 21st February 2026:

When the Lord calls Levi (likely the same person as Matthew), Jesus sees the person and not the job title. He is calling the person of Levi not the tax collector. Even though the job he does is immoral, Jesus sees past the treason and sees a person with infinite worth and calls him so that he might realise his full potential. Levi was ready to respond to the call of Jesus; all he needed was the invitation. Lent is a season given to us to prepare for the Lord’s call, so we too might be ready to accept his invitation to *‘follow me’*. Over these next five weeks we stop and reflect on whether or not I am living life to the full, especially the vocation to which God has called me to.