

Monday in 6th Week of Easter – 11th May 2026:

When Paul arrived in Phillippi, there was no synagogue for him to visit and so he went to the riverside where a small group of women met to pray and be purified. This group included Lydia, a non-Jew and a trader in expensive purple dye. Above all, she was a woman enlightened with the gift of faith, opening her heart to the Apostle's preaching. Lydia shows generosity and mission go hand in hand. The baptised welcome the word of God into their lives and make their homes a domestic Church. Through the household of Lydia, Christianity arrives in Europe, and from here the mission to Christianise the whole world begins. Through the lay apostolate of the baptised, the Church makes the grace, love, and communion of the Trinity present to the world. Our faith in God's real presence allows us to withstand all opposition that presents itself.

Optional Memorials of various Martyrs – Tuesday 12th May 2026:

St Pancras was a 14-year-old who died during the Diocletian persecution because he refused to offer sacrifice to the Roman 'gods'. St Pancras is venerated in England because St Augustine of Canterbury brought his relics here and presented them as a gift to the Northumberland King, a sign of unity between Rome and the Celtic Church. *The Carthusian Martyrs* were executed for treason for refusing to accept Henry VIII's 'Act of Supremacy', where he declared himself the Head of the Church of England, *Nereus and Achilleus* were two Roman soldiers who resigned to become soldiers of Christ. As Roman soldiers they were required to carry out the persecution of Christians, and soldiers are required to obey orders! Having nothing against Christians personally and inspired by them, they converted, threw down their weapons, refusing to serve.

The optional memorial of Our Lady of Fatima – 13th May 2026:

Our Lady's first apparition at Fatima was recorded on 13th May 1917 and the appearances lasted six months until 13th October. Our Lady appears to three shepherd children Lucia, Francisco, and Jacinta who report they were prepared for the encounter by the vision of the Guardian Angel of Portugal, who taught the children to pray and adore the Lord. On 13th May 2017, Our Lady appears, whom the children describe: '*the Lady was more brilliant than the Sun*'. By 13th October, pilgrims had come to Fatima, and on 13th October a crowd between 30,000 and 100,000 witnessed '*the Miracle of the Sun*', its spinning and careening towards the earth, before zigzagging back to its original position; others saw Jesus, while others saw nothing.

The Ascension of the Lord - 14th May 2026:

Our Lord's Ascension is not a journey into the stratosphere, where Jesus takes another place in the created order, but to another dimension; one that is not distant or alien to us. Drawing on a biblical understanding, we see the two realms of heaven and earth as intersecting and interacting with each other. The Resurrection brought the reconciliation of heaven and earth, with Jesus' sacrifice bringing the justice of heaven to the earth. As such, the Ascension and Pentecost are linked, the Apostles told to wait for the Holy Spirit, so that they can get on with completing the mission of gathering the nations into the peace of God's Kingdom, bringing earthly realities into the heavenly sphere. The Church stands in the middle of this union of heaven and earth, being the bearer of God's divine life and presence in the World, thus, bringing credibility to the statement: *'outside the Church, one can find everything, except salvation'*.

Friday in 6th Week of Easter – 15th May 2026:

To be fruitful in mission, we often need reassurance, hearing similar words that Jesus gives to Paul: *'do not be afraid, but to speak and do not be silent; for I am with you, and no man shall attack you to harm you; for I have many people in this city.'* We know from our celebration of Easter, there are over 1,000 people in our Town who are receptive to the gospel, to say nothing of the other Christians denominations. If we are not confident in proclaiming the gospel in word, then we can do so in deed, active in the corporal works of mercy. By our words and works of charity, Christ gives the Church his grace to live a life of service to the gospel. As we await a fresh outpouring of the Holy Spirit, we are assured that our preaching is effective and has the capacity to convert many people to Christ. The Gospel is for all, and any person can, through the Church, come to accept God's grace and come to know the joy of salvation.

Saturday in 6th Week of Easter – 16th May 2026:

Priscilla and Aquila (*Acts 18:23-28*) recognise the value Apollos brings to the service of the gospel, reminding us to be open to the service that new parishioners bring to our parish. Our *'ministry of welcome'* is of vital importance, going beyond handing out a hymn book at the door but ensuring that we are on the lookout for people who may be new and have chosen to be with us. They may have various needs that, in time, they will share with us, but only if they feel safe. We need to be on our guard against unwelcoming attitudes, such as getting irritable because someone is sitting in my seat!