



**Roman Catholic Diocese of East Anglia**  
The Right Reverend Peter G. Collins  
Bishop of East Anglia

The White House  
21 Ugate  
Poringland  
Norwich  
NR14 7SH

Telephone: 01508 492202  
Fax: 01508 495358  
Email: [bishop@rcdea.org.uk](mailto:bishop@rcdea.org.uk)

6<sup>th</sup> of February, 2026



**PASTORAL LETTER FOR THE FIRST SUNDAY OF LENT  
IN THE DIOCESAN GOLDEN JUBILEE**

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

On Ash Wednesday we embarked upon our annual forty-day Lenten pilgrimage. On this First Sunday of Lent, we enter the Garden of Eden and are reminded that “the Lord God formed us of dust from the ground and breathed into our nostrils the breath of life.” The Book of Genesis provides an account of our original fall from grace through the trespass committed by Adam and Eve, the sin that brought condemnation for all.

In his Letter to the Romans, St Paul teaches how Jesus Christ liberates us from this condemnation: “For as by one man’s disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man’s obedience the many will be made righteous.” What Christ bestows is, in fact, beyond the mere restitution of what was lost. Christ bestows a gift that is incomparably greater than what was lost at the dawn of time, for the redemption is nothing less than a ‘New Creation’. The sacrifice of Christ, that which appears to be a complete desolation actually overwhelms all desolation, bestowing the light of eternal hope upon the desert places of our sinfulness.

In Matthew’s Gospel we witness Jesus being led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the Devil. Jesus has spent his whole life preparing for this moment, for this great confrontation. The Divine Word, obedient to God the Father, willingly became flesh, became human, by free choice and accepting of every consequence. Opening his humanity to the power of the Holy Spirit, Jesus courageously and completely resists the cunning wiles of the Evil One.

Quoting the wisdom of the Law according to the Book of Deuteronomy, the Son of God proclaims:

*“Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.”*

*“You shall not put the Lord your God to the test.”*

*“You shall worship the Lord your God and Him only shall you serve.”*

Jesus, the founder of a ‘new’ humanity, banishes Satan. The Evil One contrived to agitate our human pride and claimed that he could widen our horizons. In reality, the pathways of pride lead to a narrowing of our vision. Jesus proclaims the great commandment that alone can guide us into the expansive pastures of a heavenly existence.

St Bernard reminds us that obedience to the principles of the Kingdom of God is not the stifling of our God given autonomy but constitutes the graceful and noble emancipation of our body, mind and spirit in generous fulfilment of our baptismal promises. The inspiration of the Holy Spirit implants an aspiration for all that is good, for all that is true. By opening ourselves to the power of the Holy Spirit, our journey through the forty days of Lent will provide multiple opportunities to embrace the blessings of sacramental grace.

A wise pastor of the nineteenth century urges us to “make that little turn towards God which can be made at any moment of the longest wandering, at any point of the darkest path, at any hour of the deepest night; begin to seek the Lord; make that slight conversion which turns the heart towards the glory of Sion and you will find yourself in communion with the One who is your Redeemer.”

In the afternoon of this First Sunday of Lent, in cathedrals across the world, bishops will be welcoming men and women who are preparing to celebrate the Sacraments of Christian Initiation at Easter. Catechumens, those preparing for Baptism, will be called forward to be nominated as ‘The Elect’. Others, Candidates who have already been baptised in various Christian denominations, will also be called forward in recognition of a willingness to complete their sacramental initiation by entering into the Full Communion of the Catholic Church.

In this year of our Diocesan Golden Jubilee, I look forward to greeting a significantly increased number of Catechumens and Candidates from across the parishes of our diocesan family. Our Mother Church, St John’s Cathedral in Norwich, will be filled with the glorious light of hope as our beloved brothers and sisters

assemble to declare their commitment in faith to the principles of the Kingdom of God, supported by their sponsors, families and friends. I urge you all to keep them in your prayers over the coming weeks.

We are all conscious of the chaos that is afflicting our world in a multiplicity of ways. Political fragmentation reflects a deeper societal crisis of identity. This lack of human cohesion does not emerge from some vacuum but is most certainly the result of a moral disorder. St Augustine often reminds us that human liberty, our personal freedom, is not defined as some kind of ‘right’ to commit sin. When God created us, when He breathed into the very depths of our being, He was calling us to the fullness of life through an embrace of humility and a rejection of the temptations born of pride; He was calling us to open our hearts to the warmth of his abiding love; He was calling us to ready our hands for generous service. The glorious freedom of the children of God is discovered when we reject self-indulgence and covetousness; true freedom is encountered and sustained when we consciously explore the beautiful mansion of God’s grace.

As we prepare once again for the celebration of the Paschal Mysteries at Easter, let us plant ourselves afresh in the deep soil of grace so that we might encourage new spiritual growth and bring forth an abundance of fruit.

In all humility, let us embrace the invocations of today's Psalm:

*“Have mercy on us, O Lord, for we have sinned.”*

*“Wash me completely from my iniquity”*

*“Create a pure heart for me, O God, renew a steadfast spirit within me.”*

Through prayer, fasting and almsgiving may we nurture a deeper fidelity to the demands of God's Kingdom. With a listening heart, an informed conscience and a courageous will may we address the needs of a fractured world. Let us never become subject to that despondency that afflicts so many across the face of the Earth,. Let us be confident in what can be achieved through the triumph of grace. We stand not alone for we are accompanied by the Christ who has come to lead us out of the desert of our sin, who has come to set us free. Amen.

+Peter

**The Right Reverend Peter G. Collins**

**Bishop of East Anglia**