



LENTEN PASTORAL LETTER

A Church Ready for Converts

To be read at all Masses on the First Sunday of Lent

22nd February 2026

My dear brothers and sisters,

As Lent begins, we see a growing number of men and women, many of them young adults, who are seeking faith and baptism. This stream of new converts is evident across our Diocese and country and indeed across the western world. It is all the more remarkable because this new generation of converts have been drawn to the Church by no special initiative on our part, rather by the constancy of faith, the reverence of worship and the authentic witness they have found. They may be statistically small in number compared with the overall decline of Christianity in our land, yet their search for Christ and His Church represents a moment of grace.

As Shrewsbury Diocese began its mission some 175 years ago, Saint John Henry Newman spoke of “*a Church ready for converts.*” Seeing so many today, often coming from no religious background to find the faith of the Church, I recalled these words of Cardinal Newman. We must now be ready to support new converts who are seeking Christ and His Church amid all the confusions of our time.

At the beginning of Lent, the Scriptures remind us of the deceptions which have marked humanity’s struggle from the very dawn of history and of Christ’s victory over Satan in the wildernessⁱ. It is with Christ that we are to renounce the evil one who seeks to pervert all that is good and trueⁱⁱ. It should not surprise us that, through the shadows of our time, many are coming in search of Christ, the truth of His teaching and all the means of grace He has entrusted to His Church in the Sacraments, and supremely in His Eucharist.

The journey of these new converts brings us back to the original purpose of Lent as the time when adults prepared for Baptism. The Church quickly recognised this time was needed by all the baptised as part of their continuing conversion.

It is for this reason, that we now keep these 40 Lenten days devoted to greater prayer, self-denial and generosity as we each prepare to renew at Easter the promises of our Baptism, confess our sins and receive the Holy Eucharist with ever renewed faith and love. It is by striving to live our own conversion that we can best support a new generation of converts. For Lent calls us to recognise that every member of the Church must always be a convert.

On my visits to parishes, I often remind you of the many thousands of souls in every place who depend so much on your prayer and faithfulness. Today, with a prayer card distributed at Mass, I invite you to pray for all those in your lives and for the many adults who are seeking the faith and the new life of Baptism. May we truly be a Church of converts, that is always “*ready for converts.*”

United in this prayer, and as a convert with you,

+ *Mark*

Bishop of Shrewsbury

ⁱ Cf. Gen 2: 7-9, 3:1-7 and Mt. 4:1-11

ⁱⁱ Cf. Catechism of the Catholic Church No. 538