



**St Mark's Church, Reigate**

March 2025

### **Letter from the Vicar, Father Martin Colton**

Dear Friends

The arrival of March heralds the start of spring and its promise of better weather. March always provides a wealth of important dates in the Christian calendar too. The month begins with St David's Day on the 1<sup>st</sup> followed by St Patrick's Day on the 17<sup>th</sup>.

This year Shrove Tuesday (or Pancake Day) will be celebrated on 4 March. The word shrove is derived from shrive, meaning to confess sins. Making pancakes used up all the fat in the household before Lent when there would be fasting and plain food. The earliest pancake recipe dates back to 1430. Ash Wednesday, on 5 March, being the first day of Lent, gets its name from the ashes received in church on this day created by burning the previous year's palm crosses. Ashes have been a symbol of mourning and penitence since Old Testament times and have been a feature of the start of Lent since the eighth century, being a remnant of 'sackcloth and ashes' worn in early days to acknowledge repentance and unworthiness. The priest makes a sign of the cross with ashes on each person's forehead, reminding us that our bodies will one day be dust in the ground. Yet by receiving ash on our heads, we acknowledge God as Creator and remind ourselves that, although we are flesh which will die, our spirit is immortal.

On Sunday 30 March (the fourth Sunday of Lent), we celebrate Mothering Sunday. Until the late twentieth century, the first reading at church services had a mother image: 'Jerusalem ..... mother of us all'. This original 'mother' theme was extended from Jerusalem to the 'mother' church – the cathedral or the parish church which it became traditional to visit in mid-Lent. When village congregations visited the nearby mother church, maybe in the town, older children would have met up with their families and so mothers of children were embraced into the mothering theme from the 1600's. Young people in domestic service were allowed a home visit six months after being hired at autumn fairs. This became known as going 'a mothering' or 'mid-Lenting'. Walking home they would pick wild flowers for their mothers, and today it is traditional to give out posies of flowers to care-givers on this Sunday.

And, finally, also on Mothering Sunday as this year it is on the last Sunday in March, the clocks go forward as we welcome British Summer Time, when we can really begin to enjoy those longer, warmer days of spring and all the new life that they bring!

Every blessing,