

Twentieth Sunday in Ordinary Time, 18th August 2019

"I have come to bring fire to the earth, and how I wish it were blazing already!"

To ancient Jews, fire symbolised the unapproachable purity of God. The book of Exodus describes the billowing of smoke as God descended to Mount Sinai. No one dared approach for fear of being vaporised in its consuming heat. Yet holiness also held an irresistible attraction. God encouraged Moses to approach, and not for the first time. God had already spoken to him from a burning bush in the wilderness, and instructed him to remove his shoes, for he was standing on holy ground. That is the effect on anyone who draws nearer to God: transformation. The encounter with pure goodness is likely to make us better, humbler people. And just as Moses' bush blazed but was not consumed, so we, too, may burn with God's own holy presence and survive unharmed; for God does not desire to destroy, but to beckon us closer. The experience of holiness, it seems, is only intolerable to those who harden themselves against its purifying effect.

In today's Gospel we hear how Jesus said, "I have come to bring fire." He wished it were already blazing across the earth. This was not intended to terrify: Jesus had come neither to judge nor to destroy, but to save. His vision was of a holier way of life spreading like wildfire across the earth. He believed that God was beginning to intervene in this world in a new and unstoppable way. Jesus did not say, "Stand clear," but "Come to me." And all who did, however sinful, found themselves forgiven and cleansed in his holy presence. John the Baptist had foretold that the Christ would come to baptise with fire. So it was that at Pentecost, "tongues" of fire came to rest upon the heads of his followers. It was not, as John had anticipated, an avenging fire. God's desire was to purify all peoples in an outpouring of God's own Holy Spirit, the burning ardour of pure love.

Imagine the whole world enveloped in God's own divine life, with cruelty and meanness melting away in its heat. Imagine sparks of joy and generosity igniting friendship between neighbours. The two disciples on the road to Emmaus exclaimed that their hearts burned within them. It is possible for every heart to feel like that: burning with love for God; with compassion for those who suffer; with indignation at injustice.

Jesus did not set out to divide families, nor to be a destructive force, yet the fire of purifying love that he set ablaze across the world obliges people to make a choice: either to allow their lives to be changed or to resist God's sanctifying presence. Let our choice be to step forward into the divine life God so longs to share with us.

Farewell Reception. The members of the Finance Committee and the Parish Council are arranging a Farewell Reception for me (wine and canapés) in the Parish Hall on **Friday evening, 27th September 2019 (7.00pm to 9.00pm)**

please make a note in your diaries! Children are, of course, welcome! Next weekend will be my last weekend in St Michael`s!

Fr Tom Quinn RIP. The Funeral Mass for Father Tom Quinn will take place on Tuesday 3rd September at 12noon in St John Fisher Church, Shepperton.

Update on the benches. Many of you have complimented John and Jack Clark on their excellent work in stripping the benches in the church. Next week they should complete re-varnishing them, and then the following week the kneelers will be re-attached to the benches.

Parish Office. During the school holidays the Parish Office will open **ONLY on Friday mornings (9.30am to 12.30pm).**

It will re-open on **Monday 2nd September.**

Please leave a message on the answer phone (01784 252230) or send an email (ashford@rcdow.org.uk) and I will respond as soon as I am able to do so.

Fr Jim Overton

Offertory Collection. Last week's collection was £1,641.17 - Envelopes £525.35; Bankers Orders £600.00 (weekly average); Loose Plate £515.82

The Bucket Collection in July and August is for Sam Beare Hospice.

The Westminster Lourdes Choir. The Westminster Lourdes Choir will be presenting Peter's Way of the Cross in the chapel of St Mary's University, Twickenham on 27th September 2019 at 7.30pm. See notice in the narthex.

Readings for 25th August, 21st Sunday in Ordinary Time
Isaiah 66: 18-21; Hebrews 12: 5-7, 11-13; Luke 13: 22-30

Emergency Exits: In the event of an emergency, please note that the three fire exits from the church are the main church entrance, the side door to the left of St Joseph's Chapel, and the main entrance to the hall.

PLEASE PRAY

For all the sick and housebound in our parish.

For anniversaries in August since 2012. William Andrew, Patricia Cowling, Gary Dale, John Field, Tom Kelly, Catherine King, Keith MacKenzie, Jimmy Rowan, Michael Sugrue, Irene Tompsett, Gilbert Francis Van Gramberg.

For Fr Voytek Przjalkowski and the parishioners of St David's, Stanwell in the Upper Thames Deanery.

For the Holy Father's Prayer Intention that families, through their life of prayer and love, become ever more clearly 'schools of true human growth.'

Mass Intentions 18th – 25th August

Sunday 18th	Vigil Mass Saturday, 6.00pm Tom Kelly RIP
	9.15am Margaret Jones RIP
	11.00am Rocky Fernandes RIP
	6.00pm The people of the parish
Mon 19th	9.15am Concepcion Gomez RIP
Tues 20th	9.15am In thanksgiving to St Anthony
Wed 21st	9.15am Romeo Vieira RIP
Fri 23rd	9.15am Holy Souls
Sat 24th	9.15am Deceased priests
Sunday 25th	Vigil Mass Saturday, 6.00pm Ann Hawkins RIP
	9.15am The people of the parish
	11.00am Agostinho Barretto RIP
	6.00pm Mary and Michael Braganza RIP

Sunday Mass

(Vigil) Saturday, 6.00pm

9.15am Family (Folk Group, Children's Liturgy of the Word)

11.00am Sung (First Sunday, Ordinary of the Mass sung in Latin)

6.00pm

Holy Days of Obligation Mass

9.15am and 7.00pm

Weekday Mass

9.15am Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Friday, Saturday

Eucharistic Adoration

Saturday 9.45 – 10.15am

Sacrament of Reconciliation

Saturday 10.15 – 10.45am *(and at any time by appointment)*

Sacrament of Baptism

Normally celebrated on a Saturday once a month. To arrange a Baptism contact
Baptism Catechist Lee Gibson on 07713 760281 or lee.gibson.2na@btinternet.com

St Michael's Catholic Church

112 Clarendon Road, Ashford, Middlesex TW15 2QD

Telephone: 01784 252230

Email: ashford@rcdow.org.uk

Website: <http://parish.rcdow.org.uk/ashford>

This parish is part of the Westminster Catholic Diocese Trustee Charity no. 233699

Parish Priest: Mgr James Overton

Parish Secretary: Mrs Shenda Holmes

Summer Parish Office Hours: Friday 09.00am - 1.00pm
