

Our Lord Jesus Christ, Universal King 24th November 2019

“If you are the king of the Jews, save yourself.”

Today's Mass readings also use imagery to describe Christ's unique kind of kingship. We hear about David, the shepherd king, an image that Jesus himself found inspiring. He had no doubt watched shepherds leading their sheep, placing their own bodies at night across the doorway of the sheepfold to protect them. It was a lonely, dangerous life, and Jesus identified strongly with that role. Our second reading uses the image of a head, indivisible from the rest of the body, but sustaining and guiding it. St Paul sees the Church as a body with Christ as its head, reconciling and unifying all creation in himself.

Our Gospel reading offers a more powerful image still. St Luke describes a scene of execution, with Jesus hanging on the cross between two criminals. Undefended against an unjust conviction; humiliated at the hands of his enemies; dying an agonising death - there could not be a more vivid image of a servant king bearing the suffering of those who look to him for rescue. This was not a kind of leadership the Jewish high priest or Roman procurator Pontius Pilate could easily comprehend. They enjoyed wealth and status and were prepared to exercise power corruptly in order to keep it. A proper king, they assumed, would use his regal status to further his own interests. This was the test they put to Jesus: “If you are king of the Jews, save yourself.” They could not understand that the test of a true king is not whether he can save himself, but whether he is willing to save his people.

*The book *The Robe*, by Lloyd C. Douglas, contains this dialogue between Justus, an early Christian, and Marcellus, a Roman officer:*

Justus: “Jesus is alive... Sometimes I feel aware of him, as if he is close by...you have no temptation to cheat... when for all you know Jesus is standing beside you.”

Marcellus: “I'm afraid I would feel very uncomfortable being watched by some invisible presence.”

Justus: “Not if that presence helped... keep you at your best.”

How does the risen, glorified Jesus help to keep me at my best?

We, too, may be tempted to conceive of leadership in terms of self-interest. There are times, perhaps, when we wish Jesus would use his divine power to promote the careers and fortunes of his friends. We might quite like it if Jesus crushed our enemies. We might enjoy basking in his reflected glory. We might wish for a share of that power or celebrity. But the Gospel sets before us an alternative kind of power - love for others - and a radically different kind of crown - a painful one of thorns. To follow Jesus is to care about others more than ourselves and to suffer when they suffer. To follow our king is to fight the cause of justice and peace; and, if necessary, to lay down our lives and reputation in the service of God and those whom God loves. It is to identify ourselves with the lowly and needy people of this world. We are followers of a servant king. We have inherited his light.

All of us are leaders in one way or another. Some of us carry responsibility at work; others exercise voluntary jobs or ministries; many of us have families - and there is no more sacrificial leadership than parenthood. All of us are called to set a Christian example in the local community, and that kind of good citizenship may cost us dearly at times. Whatever strength, authority or wisdom we have, we exercise humbly, as Our Lord did, for the sake of others. Jesus Christ, king of the universe, asks nothing less of us.

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Stephen Foster RIP. We thank God for giving such a wonderful person and artist who shared his gift with us at St Michael's. Stephen sculpted the angels for the front of the altar and Christ the Word of God for the lectern, bringing lovely richness to the sanctuary. May God grant him eternal rest. Our prayers and sympathies also with Peter Foster, his brother, who sculpted the Pelican.

Confirmation Mass 2020. Applications Forms are now available and should be made online ONLY. Please go to <https://parish.rcdow.org.uk/ashford/> to download and return the application form by **5th January 2020** to **ashfordconf@rcdow.org.uk** (do NOT send to ashford@rcdow.org.uk). On the parish website you will need to select Sacramental Preparation and then select Confirmation. The date of the Confirmation is Saturday 27th June at 2:30pm and will be conferred by the Episcopal Vicar Canon Paschal Ryan.

The God who speaks – The Year of The Word. Throughout 2020, commencing on the First Sunday of Advent this year, **1st December**, the Catholic Church in England and Wales in partnership with the Bible Society, is focusing on meeting Christ in the Scriptures. Solemn vespers for the launch of The Year of the Word will take place in Westminster Cathedral on **Sunday 1st December 2019 at 3.30pm**. See the poster in the narthex for more details. There will be events across the Diocese and details of these will follow in the coming weeks. Throughout the year Lee Gibson, Parish Catechist, will be preparing a document on the readings for each week to assist in reflecting on them in a biblical context.

Advent My Day by Day booklets are now available in the narthex, £1.00. Please place your donation in the Publications Box.

Choir Appeal. The choir only have 4 choir members available for Midnight Mass, so are looking for people to join them for singing at the Mass. This is a not a recruitment drive for the choir, but simply asking for support for Midnight Mass. Practices will be on **Thursdays at 7.30pm in the organ loft** and should take about an hour. For more information, please contact Shenda Holmes on 01784 252230 or ashford@rcdow.org.uk

Fr Sidon Sagar FDP

<p>Offertory Collection. Last week's collection was £1,669.52 - Envelopes £581.25; Bankers Orders £600.00 (weekly average); Loose Plate £488.27</p>
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Dates for your diary in December

Tuesday 3rd	Ashford and Staines Joint Advent Penitential Service, at St Michael's 7.30pm
Saturday, 7th	Antiques Fair 10.00am – 3.00pm
Sunday, 8th	Monthly teas and coffees after 9.15am Mass
Friday 13th	Christmas Carols 'Sing a Long' 7.00pm in the parish hall
Sunday 15th	Family Carol Service with Tableaux 3.00pm
Tuesday 24th	First Mass of Christmas 6.00pm Midnight Mass 11.00 with Carols 10.30pm
Wednesday 25th	Christmas Masses 9.15am and 11.00am (no evening Mass)

The Bucket Collection in November is for Crossroads Care Surrey.
providing vital respite breaks to unpaid carers.

Ladies Circle. We meet on **Thursday, 28th November at 8.00pm** in the parish hall – last chance to pay for our Christmas Meal!

Repository. Thank you to everyone who supported the sale last weekend! We still have parish diaries, calendars and Christmas Cards and gifts available.

St Michael's Prayer Group now meets on **Monday afternoons, 2.00 – 4.00pm** in St Joseph's Chapel. All are welcome. Please contact Frances Castledine on 01784 255915 for more information.

Free Christmas lunch for local pensioners. The Ash Tree public house is inviting 25 local pensioners to a free Christmas lunch on **Tuesday 10th December 2019** 1.00pm for 1.30 start. Please fill in your name and food choice on the sheet in the narthex. If you need further information, please call Moya Hogan on 07791 641456.

Donate your old frames and stamps and help make a change. *Specsavers in Staines* collect old, unwanted glasses so they can be used to improve the eye health of those less fortunate in the developing world; and *Spelthorne Mental Association, Ashford* collects used stamps.

Christmas Food Bank Collection on behalf of Trussell Trust. One of our parishioners is hosting this event in the parish hall on **Sunday 1st December** from 4.30pm putting together different parcel and hampers which will all be donated to the local foodbanks. A collection team will be in the narthex the end of Masses **next weekend (30th November/1 December)** to collect the following much needed items for their local Food Banks to help out those who are in need especially at this time of year - *Boxes / Tins of biscuits / gingerbread / shortbread; Boxes of chocolate; Christmas puddings; Mince pies; Gravy; Stuffing.* Any donations will be greatly appreciated.

Readings for 1st December, First Sunday of Advent
Isaiah 2: 1-5; Romans 13: 11-14; Matthew 24: 37- 44

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 November since 2012. Bethany Payne, Frank Collins, Margaret Curran, Elizabeth Gicquel, Catherine Greenwood, Anne Khan, Laszlo Kormendy, Melissa Morgan, Stephen Mulligan, Patrick O'Reilly, Dominic Regan, Andrew Stuart, Norman Taylor, Davide Tozzi, Irene Walley, Sheelagh Williams, Ron Worley.

for Fr Ulick Loring and the parishioners of Twickenham in the Upper Thames Deanery; and for staff and students of St Mary's College, Twickenham.

for the Holy Father's Prayer Intention that a spirit of dialogue, encounter and reconciliation emerge in the Near East, where diverse religious communities share their lives together.

Mass Intentions 24th November – 1st December

Sunday 24th	Vigil Mass Saturday, 6.00pm	Robert Houlihan RIP
	9.15am	Melissa Morgan RIP
	11.00am	A special intention (DH)
	6.00pm	The people of the parish
Mon 25th	9.15am	Holy Souls on the November List
Tues 26th	9.15am	Grazyna Mencil RIP
Wed 27th	9.15am	Oliver Griffin RIP
Fri 29th	9.15am	Holy Souls on the November List
Sat 30th	9.15am	Deceased members of the O'Donovan family
Sunday 1st	Vigil Mass Saturday, 6.00pm	A special intention (BO &UO)
	9.15am	Aileen Parisi RIP
	11.00am	A special intention (GB & FB)
	6.00pm	The people of the parish

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 and Benediction

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

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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: Fr Sidon Sagar FDP; Assistant Priest: Fr Carlo Mazzotta FDP

Parish Secretary: Mrs Shenda Holmes

Parish Office Hours: Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Friday 10.00am - 1.00pm
