

Fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time, 4th February 2024

"He cured many who were suffering."

If you've ever come into contact with a charity or other organisation that works with people who are really down on their luck — people who are suffering from homelessness, say, or unemployment, or drug and drink problems - then you will have heard tales of how it's not just the experience of physical suffering that is so hard, but how troubled they have been, often feeling as if they have no hope left. But you often hear remarkable stories of transformation — of how those who have fallen by the wayside have been picked up by an organisation and helped to have their lives turned around. Even more extraordinary are the stories of those who, with help, have not only rebuilt their lives and rediscovered hope, but have then volunteered to help others. It's like a reverse domino effect: once one is built up, others are too. A community is formed where once people felt isolated, worn down by life, and are now healed.

This account from Mark's Gospel is typical of many of the stories of Jesus' ministry. It is the Sabbath and Jesus has been to synagogue with James and John, and then they went on to Simon and Andrew's house. They would have followed tradition by resting for the rest of the Sabbath, until they discover that there is someone in need — Simon's mother-in-law, who is sick. So, Jesus puts scruples to one side and focuses on what matters and attends to the woman. She is only the first of many to call for his help that day. By sundown, the end of the Sabbath, practically the whole town is crowding into the house.

Nobody of faith is turned away, but eventually there comes a time when even Jesus needs a break. It's worth noting how often we are told in the Gospels that Jesus takes times to pray. Prayer is as much a part of his life as action before he again fulfils his mission by preaching. There is one line in this Gospel that could easily be overlooked but is deeply significant because it confirms how the impact of Jesus means conversion: when Simon's mother-in-law is cured of her fever, she doesn't relax, or run to tell people all about it. It is her moment to wait on the others — to serve them, just as Jesus had served her.

The verses from Job, heard as part of the readings, suggest a sense of isolation, of feeling that life offers no purpose, no meaning, and is overwhelming. Those are sentiments that could equally be expressed by people today. Job's world seems very small: he doesn't look out to others, nor is there a sense of God being there to sustain him.

Mark's Gospel is very different. Even on a quiet Sabbath day, this world is teeming with people: Jesus and his apostles, Simon's mother-in-law, the crowds who flock to Simon's house. Jesus is at the centre of a community. There is not the same isolation. But it is Jesus who makes a difference, turning to each person who needs him, one by one. Like those who follow him in Mark's Gospel, we too can have our lives transformed by Jesus. Conversion requires trust, though, and like those who came to Simon's house at the end of the Sabbath day, trusting that Jesus would cure them, so we must be ready to offer him our trust if we are to undergo our own conversion.

A cure of a physical ailment may take a moment and last a lifetime, but conversion is not a one-off. Like a physical cure, it is about one's life changing for good, but it also requires our constant engagement. Conversion is a relationship, a mutual exchange between God and ourselves. God's love is there for us - but are we willing to reciprocate?

We glimpse an insight into what full engagement - that conversion - means from what happens to Simon's mother-in-law. Jesus overturns the Sabbath order to cure her of fever that day, and what he gives to her inspires her to in turn give to others as she waits on them. Conversion brings us to God, just as the encounter of Simon's mother-in-law with Jesus brought her to God. But sustaining our conversion needs prayer, just as Jesus also needed prayer. And that prayer will also help us build our relationships with our communities.

Converted to Jesus, ready to serve others, we will, unlike Job, be able to cast aside our melancholy and our eyes will indeed see joy.

© Redemptorist Publications, The Living Word A3, 2023, adapted

Special collection for the Latin Patriarch in Jerusalem. Cardinal Vincent Nichols has asked parishes to hold a collection in response to the appeal from the Latin Patriarch in Jerusalem for support especially for those in Gaza.

"The situation they face is grave and most demanding. We were told that there are still 600 people sheltering and being cared for in the parish compound, together with over 50 seriously disabled and vulnerable children. Water and food can be bought in the local markets at much inflated prices. With the damage inflicted on this site some time ago now, cooking hot meals is only possible three times a week. The parish is also providing for 200 people in the Orthodox property as well as for local Muslim neighbours.

The situation in the West Bank is also grave with more than 100,000 families losing income because of various factors, as well as the absence of all visitors and pilgrims."

The Patriarchate is able to provide assistance. It can make funding directly available to the parish leadership and is providing food etc. to many in the West Bank.

Cardinal Nichols hopes we can respond to this direct appeal from the Latin Patriarch.

There will be a retiring collection here on Ash Wednesday, at the end of both Masses.

Welcome and thank you to Mgr Jim Overton for celebrating the Saturday evening and Sunday morning Masses this weekend.

Fr Sidon Sagar. Please keep Fr Sidon in your prayers as he enjoys a break with his family.

Weekday Masses. Mass this week on Monday, 5th February (9.15am) and Wednesday, 7th February (6.00pm) will be said in St Joseph's Chapel.

Ash Wednesday, Wednesday 14th February, is a day of Fasting and Abstinence. There will be Mass with the distribution of Ashes at 9.15am and 7.00pm.

Joyce Shelley RIP. The funeral for Joyce Shelley will take place on Thursday, 15th February at 11.15am.

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

Mass Intentions. If you wish to book a Mass, please drop your intention envelope in the box at the back of the church, in the offertory collection or through the presbytery letterbox.

Bucket Collection. The Bucket Collection is for TALK Surrey – *supporting people with Aphasia after a stroke or brain injury.* You will find the donations box in the wall at the back of the church.

Annual Mass of Our Lady of Lourdes at Westminster Cathedral on Saturday, 10th February, 2.30pm, during which Anointing of the Sick will be offered. To book a place (free), please contact Shenda Holmes in the parish office on 01784 252230 or ashford@rcdow.org.uk

Marian Year, 11th February to 20th November, 2024. We, the Sons of Divine Providence, are celebrating the Marian Year and invite you to join us to celebrate the year with devotion and veneration to Mary, Mother of God.

Parish Carnival Bingo Night, Saturday 10th February. Put on your dancing shoes and your brightest outfits as we celebrate Carnival next **Saturday, 10th February from 7.00pm** in the parish hall. Sing along, dance or tap your feet to the Live Duo music performance by Wahida & Glenn. Entry is free. It will be an evening packed with entertainment, delicious snacks, bingo and raffle prizes (*bring your own alcohol, and don't forget the cash!*). Funds raised will go towards the support of the parish. Donations for the raffle, in cash or kind, are very welcome at the parish office.

A cot for a 1-year old baby. A parishioner, on behalf of her neighbour, is looking for a cot for a 1 year old baby. Have you got one to give away or to lend? Please call Frances on 01784 455915.

St Michael's News. The next edition of our parish magazine will be out at Easter. If you would like to submit an article for the magazine, please forward it to Sonia at soniatalbutt@gmail.com

If you would like to advertise in the magazine, please contact Shenda in the parish office at ashford@rcdow.org.uk

Homes for Ukraine programme. Caritas Social Action Network are working in partnership with one of their member charities, St John of God Hospitalier Services, to co-ordinate a Homes for Ukraine programme, which provides temporary housing and support for Ukrainian displaced individuals as they adjust to life in the UK. More information can be found at: <https://sjog-homesforukraine.uk>
You will find some prayer cards at the back of the church.

This Sunday's readings, Fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time, 4th February 2024

Job 7: 1-4, 6-7; 1 Corinthians 9: 16-19, 22-23; Mark 1: 29-39

Next Sunday's readings, Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time, 11th February 2024

Leviticus 13: 1-2, 44-46; 1 Corinthians 10: 31-11: 1; Mark 1: 40-45

Offertory Collection. Thank you for your offertories last week:

Loose Plate £647.49; Envelopes £241.03; Standing Orders £900.00

Contactless £175.00 (*The Dona contactless PayPoint is in the narthex*)

Racial Justice: £9.91

MANNA Foodbank. This week's shortages: Tinned Hot Meat Meals - Chilli, Curry, Hot-Dogs, Chicken Casserole etc; Tinned Cold Meat - Ham, SPAM, Corned Beef, Chicken, Luncheon Meat etc; Tinned Carrots, Green Beans, Mixed Vegetables; Long-Life Cartons of Juice - full size; Cereal and Breakfast Bars; Tinned Rice Pudding; Tinned Potatoes; Small Jars of Instant Coffee; Tomato Ketchup; Small bags of Loose Rice 500g; Small packs of Dried Spaghetti 500g; Small bags of Sugar 500g; Shaving Foam/Gel; Liquid Handwash; Toilet Rolls; Kitchen Rolls; Toothbrushes (especially single adult ones); Washing up Liquid; Men's 2in1 Shower Gel/Shampoo; Deodorant for women; Bars of Soap; Disposable Razors; Laundry powder/tablets/capsules/liquid.

Please leave your donations on the Presbytery doorstep or in the Narthex.

Safeguarding If you've any concerns or require advice regarding the safety or well-being of a child or vulnerable adult, please contact our parish safeguarding rep, Tiziana Demurtas on 07778 533932 or ashfordsg@safeguardrcdow.org.uk

You can also contact the Diocesan Safeguarding Team on 020 7798 9356 or

safeguarding@rcdow.org.uk

SACRAMENT OF RECONCILIATION

During Adoration after Saturday morning Mass (and by appointment)

SACRAMENT OF BAPTISM

To arrange a baptism please refer to the parish website

For the parish Mass timetable, please refer to the parish website:

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

PLEASE PRAY

for all the sick and housebound in our parish.

for anniversaries in February since 2017: Anastasia Alexander, John Curran, Marie Day, Maria Ibbett, Patricia Manners, Dermod Murphy, Philip Richards, Richard Richardson, Anne Shenton, ETTY Smale, Eileen Fox, Petra Towns, Jean Walker, Shirley Worley.

for Fr Sidon Sagar, Fr Carlo Mazzotta, the parishioners of St Michael's and for the staff and patients of Ashford Hospital in the Upper Thames Deanery.

for the Holy Father's Prayer Intention that those who are in the final stages of life, and their families, may receive the necessary medical and human care and accompaniment.

Mass Intentions 4th - 11th February

Sun 4th **Fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time**

(Saturday Vigil Mass)	06.00pm	The people of the parish
	09.15am	Margaret Hughes intentions
	11.30am	Richard O'Neill RIP
	06.00pm	Terry Richardson and Francis Richardson RIP

Mon 5th **St Agatha, Virgin and Martyr**

09.15am Rhaki Pereira RIP

Tues 6th **Saint Paul Miki and Companions, Martyrs**

09.15am Virginia Ponce RIP

Wed 7th 06.00pm Susan Lussens intentions

Fri 9th 09.15am Victor Da Costa RIP

Sat 10th 09.15am Caetano D'souza RIP

Sun 11th **Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time**

(Saturday Vigil Mass)	06.00pm	Anne Shenton RIP
	09.15am	Richard O'Neill RIP
	11.30am	Patricia Gillespie intentions
	06.00pm	The people of the parish

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

Fr Sidon Sagar FDP: Parish Priest, Fr Carlo Mazzotta FDP: Assistant Priest

Parish Secretary: Mrs Shenda Holmes

Office Hours: Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Friday 9.00 am – 1.00 pm