

Third Sunday of Lent, 3 March 2024

"Take all this out of here and stop turning my Father's house into a market."

Everywhere we go, we are bombarded with messages to buy. Advertising hoardings loom over our streets, at bus stops and train stations. Adverts pop up on our computer screens, as we scroll through our phones or as we stare at the television. Hawkers loiter outside major tourist attractions like the Eiffel Tower. Museums and art galleries have their shops.

We have been conditioned to consume. An experience often only seems valuable if we have a souvenir to help us to remember it. Our worth is too often measured in the possessions that we have accumulated, regardless of the consequences to our earth, or to those who are exploited in the manufacturing, sale or purchase of these goods. Those who have the power continue to prop up a system that benefits a few. There is no escape for most of us, who are trapped in this cycle as we try to navigate our way through life as best we can.

This is not a new phenomenon as we can see in today's Gospel.

Even the Temple has been turned into a place of commerce. Animals are being sold for sacrifice. Money changers are welcoming pilgrims from all over the place and changing their money so that they can buy what they need to worship.

And yet, Jesus drives all of these people out of the Temple. Why? Does he feel that people should not be able to get what they need to offer the appropriate sacrifice? Surely not.

Here in the Temple, we have a captive audience. People who need certain items, and people who can provide them. The situation is ripe for exploitation. There is nothing to stop the moneychangers and the pigeon-sellers from charging whatever they want, no matter what the people can afford. For pilgrims and other worshippers to give glory to God, they must take part in this system that is designed to take advantage of them. Instead of helping people to draw closer to God, the merchants' motive was personal profit and gain.

Not only this, but the area where the traders had set up was the place set aside for Gentiles (non-Jews) to pray. How could they concentrate on their prayer and worship while surrounded by the hubbub of this marketplace? This is what Jesus is taking a stand against. He could not allow the exploitation of those who were trying to draw closer to God. He could not accept the hollow gestures, the lip service to religion being offered by those benefiting from this exploitation. He could not have earthly priorities preventing all people from coming to know God.

Instead, he turns the tables, prophesies the destruction of the sanctuary and proclaims that he will raise it all up again in three days.

So what does this mean for us today? We know that when Jesus spoke of raising up the sanctuary after three days, he was talking of himself. Through the resurrection he has made all things new.

And yet, our world is still filled with exploitation. We still see people who put profit before other people and before their relationship with God. We might not be able to fully break down the systems that enable this, but perhaps we can each try to turn the tables in our own small way.

By living a life where we do not seek our own glory, but the glory of God; by standing up and speaking out when we see greed and unjust practices; by not seeking our own benefit or recognition, but by working together with others for the good of all; by stepping away from the endless need to consume; by stopping, being present and appreciating what we already have; by enabling others to draw closer to God, rather than putting barriers in their way.

As Saint Paul says, the crucified Christ is the wisdom of God. A wisdom which is beyond our imagining. It follows then, that all that we are encouraged to hold dear by the world around us - money, wealth, status — becomes unimportant. True wealth is found in our relationships with others, with Creation, and with God, rather than in chasing the next new purchase.

So let us not pay lip service in our worship of God or make hollow gestures. Let us try not to seek our own gain, but to support others in their journey towards God. And let us follow Christ in our lives, seeking always to turn the tables of exploitation and injustice so that all may glorify God by their lives and actions.

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Welcome and thank you to Fr Joseph Balaswamy 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.

Annual Mission Appeal. Fr Tom Ryan, from the Missionary Society of Saint Columban (Columban Fathers) will be celebrating the Masses next weekend. The retiring collection will be for the Columbian Missions, our annual Mission Appeal. (Please kindly note that it will be cash donations only – no option to use the card machine on this occasion).

Weekday Mass. Mass this week on Monday (9.15am) and Wednesday (6,00pm) will be in St Joseph's Chapel.

Stations of the Cross, Fridays in Lent at 7.00pm.

Lenten Service of Reconciliation is on **Monday 18th March at 7.00 pm** and **St David's Stanwell, on Tuesday, 19th March 2023 at 7.00 pm.**

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. *We will recite the Orionine Marian Year Prayer after Mass each day – you will find prayer cards at the back of the church.*

Pauline Gore RIP. The funeral for Pauline Gore will take place **at South West Middlesex Crematorium, Hanworth** on Friday 15th March at 1.40pm.

William (Billy) Moore RIP. The Funeral of Billy Moore will take place **at St Michael's Church** on Monday 25th March at 11.15am

Repository. On sale now are Mother's Day cards, St Patrick's Day cards and badges and Easter cards. There are still a few calendars and diaries left.

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. *Please use the new blue donation envelopes if you are able to make your Mass offering under Gift Aid.*

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 Thanksgiving for the Sacrament of Matrimony at Westminster Cathedral on Saturday 25th May 2024 at 2:30pm. The Cardinal is inviting to this Mass all couples in the Diocese, who are celebrating their **5th 10th, 25th, 30th, 40th, 50th and 60th (and every year over 60)** wedding anniversary of Catholic marriage in 2024. If you are celebrating an anniversary, please give Shenda in the parish office the following details: husband and wife's names, wedding date, full postal address and email (or telephone number, if no email) by **Monday 15th April 2024.**

Summer Internship 2024. If you are looking for an internship this summer, then look no further. Xavier Teach SouthEast is proud to offer non-funded and funded internship programmes which provides those interested in teaching with the ideal opportunity to explore life in the classroom.

For further information please contact Angelina Daniel at St Paul's Catholic College, Sunbury - adaniel@st-pauls.surrey.sch.uk

The Divine Mercy Apostolate, London is holding a Divine Mercy Lenten Retreat on Saturday 16 March 2024 from 1:30 pm - 4:30 pm at St Scholastica 17 Kenninghall Road Clapton London E5 8BS

The Retreat will include teachings on the Message of Mercy, Stations of the Cross, Holy Mass, Hour of Mercy with Adoration and Benediction and Veneration of the Image of Merciful Jesus. All Welcome. Please call Millie on 07957 594646 for more information.

This Sunday's readings, Third Sunday of Lent, 3rd March 2024

Exodus 20: 1-17; 1 Corinthians 1: 22-25; John 2: 13-25

Next Sunday's readings, Fourth Sunday of Lent, 10th March 2024

2 Chronicles 36: 14-16, 19-23; Ephesians 2: 4-10; John 3: 14-21

Offertory Collection. Thank you for your offertories last week:

Loose Plate £758.60; Envelopes £195.00; Standing Orders £900.00

Contactless £241.00 (*The Dona contactless PayPoint is in the narthex*)

CAFOD: £161.92

MANNA Foodbank. This week's shortages: *Cup-a-Soup; Tinned Spaghetti in Tomato Sauce; Custard both tinned and sachets; Tinned Rice Pudding; Tinned Hot Meat Meals - Chilli, Curry, Bolognese, Chicken, etc; Tinned Carrots, Green Beans, Mixed Vegetables; Tea Bags in 40 packs and also 160 packs; Fruit Squash; Wrapped Chocolate Biscuits - Penguins, Kit-Kats etc; Plain Porridge; Instant Mashed Potato; Noodles for 1; Tinned Mixed Bean Salad, Butter Beans and Kidney Beans; Chocolate Spread; Large and Small bags of Sugar; Blocks of Jelly; Shaving Foam/Gel; Toothpaste; Liquid Handwash. **We are very short of:** Long-Life Milk Full Fat (Blue); Crackers; Tinned Fruit; Shampoo and Washing-up-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:
(see: Parish Life → Sacramental Preparation)*

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 March since 2017: Winifred Atkinson, Ben Boone, Lena Chapman, Tina Edwards, Christina Hunt, Jennifer Langan, Jeremiah McMullen, Lorraine Munro, Noel O'Neill, William O'Rourke, Joan Peters.

for Fr Philip Baptiste and the parishioners of St Theodore of Canterbury, Hampton in the Upper Thames Deanery.

for the Holy Father's Prayer Intention that those who risk their lives for the Gospel in various parts of the world might imbue the Church with their courage and missionary drive.

Mass Intentions 3rd – 10th March

Sun 3rd

Third Sunday of Lent

(Saturday Vigil Mass)

06.00pm

The people of the parish

09.15am

Steril Stephens intentions

11.30am

Richard O'Neill RIP

06.00pm

Brian McGloin RIP

Mon 4th

09.15am

John and Mary Daly RIP

Tues 5th

09.15am

Warwick Gorman's intentions

Wed 6th

06.00pm

William and Maude Evans RIP

Fri 8th

09.15am

Alison Conlan RIP

Sat 9th

09.15am

Warwick Gorman's intentions

Sun 10th

Fourth Sunday of Lent

(Saturday Vigil Mass)

06.00pm

The people of the parish

09.15am

Paulo and Ana Amelia Gonsalves RIP

11.30am

Joe Redmond RIP

06.00pm

Alf and Joyce Jaworek RIP

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

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