

Third Sunday of Easter, 14 April 2024

“Peace be with you”

It's beautiful and broken. Using stones and fire as their tools, Ancient Egyptians created the huge, 1200-ton, granite monument, now known as the Unfinished Obelisk. Before its completion, the huge stone, bigger than Cleopatra's Needle in London, broke, and 7—10 years of hard work were abandoned. How did the workmen feel? Had they wasted their time in Aswan, or did they just shrug their shoulders and move to the next project, unaware that, 3500 years later, visitors from across the world would marvel at their achievements? Aswan's granite quarry had supplied many Ancient Egyptian monuments, but centuries of labour were almost forgotten as desert sand covered the site. The Unfinished Obelisk was only discovered in 2005 because someone wanted to build a house and, in laying the foundations, found previously unsuspected and immensely important archaeology. As a result, the hot, back-breaking work of our anonymous ancient ancestors now enriches modern lives in ways that they could never have imagined. The broken stone is a beautiful, living witness to commitment, skill, and perseverance despite hardship. Its very brokenness was also its healing.

Today's Gospel opens in the Upper Room. The two disciples who met Jesus at Emmaus tell their companions — who were still in hiding - the good news of Jesus' resurrection. One of the Emmaus returnees, Cleophas, was apparently St Joseph's brother. So why, on Good Friday, was he missing from his nephew's crucifixion and his sister-in-law's side? Why did his wife stand with Mary at the foot of the cross and help with Jesus' burial — and he didn't? Why did he and another disciple head off to Emmaus, leaving his wife and the other women to complete their heartbreaking anointing of Jesus' body? Was he embarrassed? Did he feel guilty? Was he too upset - but what about the care he should have shown — and apparently didn't - towards Mary, the mother of Jesus?

Most of today's Gospel focuses on Jesus' unexpected visit. The disciples had fled from Jesus in his hour of greatest need. Afraid for their own safety, they ran away. They didn't visit Jesus' tomb, but instead hid in shared grief, fear, and shame. They knew their cowardice and betrayal. When the women returned from Calvary and the tomb, did they voice their opinions of the men's behaviour, or did they find them too crushed to need to say anything? When Jesus appeared in their midst, the disciples thought they saw a ghost. They deserved his anger, but he didn't criticise them or make them feel any worse than they already did. He didn't condemn their weakness or highlight the women's courage. Instead, Jesus surprised them with a greeting of peace and a request for food. Their brokenness wasn't terminal. Jesus started the healing process.

Throughout Jesus' public ministry, he nurtured his disciples, giving of himself in ways beyond their understanding and expectations. His followers often muddled along, following Jesus because they recognised that, in their limitations, they needed him. Following Good Friday, the disciples felt broken, but they couldn't turn back the clock and undo the flaws they had discovered in themselves. Jesus had died and they had done nothing to protect him.

But we're like that, aren't we? It's easier to see our brokenness than our loveliness and yet, to Jesus, it's that loveliness which he sees first. He knows the cracks that we try to hide even from ourselves, knows that they can hold the clue to recovery and wholeness. The ancient Egyptians working on the huge obelisk didn't see the tiny cracks which would eventually grow and potentially destroy their efforts. Yet those cracks would highlight something beautiful: brokenness needn't destroy. New and unimagined beginnings are possible.

Someone who is unaware of their own imperfections doesn't learn from experience and can be very insensitive towards others. Their brokenness cannot be healed because they can't see the flaws - and so small cracks grow bigger. Some of the world's most beautiful people are those who have learned humility, compassion and understanding through their own difficult experiences. Their struggles have opened their eyes and hearts to the goodness in others. They have room for growth. There's room for Jesus.

The disciples were very different people after meeting the post-resurrection Jesus. He offered them the possibility of a fresh start and so they started to grow through their weaknesses. Their brokenness became something beautiful and a lasting example of healing and new beginnings. Jesus' invitation to his disciples is offered to us. Let's celebrate our own brokenness and the loveliness which Jesus can repair and make even more beautiful.

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Sunday Friends. Please note that Sunday Friends are not meeting this Sunday. Back on Sunday 21st April. *The Look Leaflets will be available in the narthex.*

Monthly teas and coffees – this Sunday, 14th April after the Sunday 9.15am Mass in the parish hall. - Remember, the joy of tea and coffee lies not just in the beverages themselves but in the shared moments and conversations. Cheers to building beautiful connections over a cuppa! 🍰 ☕ .

Easter Drawing Competition. The winners of the Easter Drawing Competition will be announced at the 9.15am Mass next Sunday, 21st April.

Kindly note the forthcoming Funerals at St Michael's Church: **Christopher Worley RIP on Monday, 15th April at 11.00am.**

Priest Training Fund

Next Sunday is Good Shepherd Sunday, the day we pray for priests and for vocations to the priesthood. The annual collection for the Priest Training Fund will take place next weekend. This fund pays for the priestly formation of men for the Catholic priesthood. There are currently **49** men studying at Allen Hall seminary, **13** of whom are from our own Diocese. We also have one seminarian in Valladolid and one at the Beda, presently on pastoral placement in Ruislip. There are also two on a propaedeutic year at Redemptoris Mater. Last year **3** deacons were ordained for Westminster Diocese. The Priest Training Fund also supports the ongoing enrichment and formation of our ordained priests. Your generous donation helps ensure we can support these men who are called to be like Christ the Good Shepherd. Donation envelopes are available in the back of the church. Please take one home, read the information, and bring it back next weekend with your donation. Please continue to pray for vocations and for our priests. You can use the QR code to make your donation online or visit www.rcdow.org.uk/donations. Thank you for your generosity.

Baptism Preparation Course. The next Baptism Preparation Course is on Saturday 6th April 2024 at 10.00 am in the presbytery meeting room. If you require the Sacrament of Baptism for your child in May, June or July 2024 then you will need to contact ashfordcatechist@rcdow.org.uk so that the necessary paperwork can be finalised before the date of the course.

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**.

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 the Princess Alice Hospice. You will find the donations box in the wall at the back of the church.

Antiques Fair. The next fair is **on Saturday 20th April**, 10.00am- 3.00pm in the parish hall. Please do go and have a look at the variety of stalls. More information from Anna Hogan on 01784 254462. If you are able to help with setting up and clearing away afterwards, please do call Anna. Thank you!

Help at Antiques Fairs. Anna and Tony Hogan have been running the monthly Antiques Fairs in the parish hall for many years, raising many funds for the parish. They really do need some help now with setting up and clearing away afterwards. They set up the hall on the Friday night before the fair. The fair runs until 3.00pm, so help would be needed to clear/move table and chairs from about 4.00pm on the Saturday. If you are able to help please contact Anna on 01784 254462.

This Sunday's readings, Third Sunday of Easter, 14th April

Acts 3: 13-15, 17-19; 1 John 2: 1-5; Luke 24: 35-48

Next Sunday's readings, Fourth Sunday of Easter, 21st April

Acts 4: 8-12; 1 John 3: 1-2; John 10: 11-18

Offertory Collection.

Thank you for your offertories last week:

Loose Plate **£557.17**; Envelopes **£238.30**; Standing Orders £900.00

Contactless **£170** (*The Dona contactless PayPoint is in the narthex*)

MANNA Foodbank. This week's shortages:

Fruit Squash, Cup a Soup, Cereal/Breakfast Bars, Wrapped Chocolate Biscuits - Penguin, Kit-Kats etc, Tinned Potatoes, Porridge, Long-Life Juice - full size cartons, Crackers, Tinned Salmon/Sardines/Mackerel etc (we have good stocks of Tuna), Tea Bags in 40's and 160 packs, Tinned Butter Beans and Kidney Beans, Spreads - Jam, Peanut Butter, Chocolate Spread, Marmalade, Disposable Razors, Liquid Handwash, Washing up Liquid, Deodorant, Shaving Foam/Gel, Toilet Paper

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 → Baptism

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 April since 2017: Margerida Borges, Brian Cook, Alcina DaSilva, Anne Gates, Christine Hunter, Ian Kunzi, Peter McDonnell, Mary McGann, Joan McMullen, Mary McTernan, Domingo Monteiro, Joe Redmond, Mary Savage, Carmela Tirone, Patricia Trussler.

for Fr Sean Church and the parishioners of St Francis de Sales, Hampton Hill in the Upper Thames Deanery.

for the Holy Father's Prayer Intention that the dignity and worth of women be recognised in every culture, and for an end to the discrimination they face in various parts of the world.

Mass Intentions 14th – 21st April

Sun 14th **Third Sunday of Easter**

(Saturday Vigil Mass)

06.00pm

Izaak Lewis RIP

09.15am

Alcina and Clement Da Silva RIP

11.30am

Joe Redmond RIP

06.00pm

The people of the parish

Mon 15th

09.15am

Tues 16th

09.15am

Jean Clements

Wed 17th

06.00pm

Evangelina Lao – Healing Mass

Fri 19th

St Alphege, Bishop and Doctor

09.15am

Sat 20th

09.15am

Jim Gibson - RIP

Sun 21st

Fourth Sunday of Easter

(Saturday Vigil Mass)

06.00pm

09.15am

Joaquim and Fabio Fernandes – in thanksgiving

11.30am

Richard O'Neill RIP

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