

Fourth Sunday of Easter, 21 April 2024

"I am the Way, the Truth and the Life."

Saying goodbye can be a painful experience. Saying a final goodbye to a loved one can be heartbreaking. That's how the apostles must have felt at the Last Supper when Jesus told them that he was going to leave them. Next day he would meet a savage, degrading death. And the apostles? They would take to their heels, convinced that Jesus' mission was a disaster.

Jesus tried to prepare them for it. A few days earlier he had begged them, "Do not let your hearts be troubled", even hinting that when he returned to the Father, he'd be closer to them than ever before. And so it was. Within weeks of his death, these same men were boldly proclaiming, "Jesus is alive. We've seen him in the flesh". They recalled how the apostle Thomas had once asked, "We don't know where you're going . . . so how can we know the way?" They remembered Jesus' precious reply: "I am the way, the truth and the life."

I am the way" — Jesus doesn't point outwards, as if to indicate a route to be followed. He points to himself, "I am the way". Walking in step with him, we draw closer to God, we understand what it means to have God as our Father.

"I am the truth" - Jesus doesn't simply speak the truth: he is the truth. In everything he does — in his miracles, his care for the sick and rejected, his acceptance of a cruel death - all is truth, a revelation of the true nature of our God. When one of his friends said that all he wanted was to see this Father that Jesus was always talking about, Jesus replied, "Have I been with you all this time, and you still do not know me? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father." Jesus and the Father are equal in every way.

"I am the life" - Life is God's gift to us, a gift so precious that people cling to it even in appalling circumstances. An early Christian writer claimed that the glory of God is a human being who is fully alive. That is what Jesus has come to offer us: "I have come that (you) may have life and have it abundantly."

"Abundant life" - not simply a continuation of life as we know it, but a new and richer life than we could ever imagine, untouched by pain or sadness or distress: the life that was planted in our hearts on the day of our baptism and, like baptism, is ours for ever. No wonder Jesus spoke of it as "being born again"!

All this that we've talked about so far is the message that the apostles were delivering within weeks of the resurrection, and, as Peter tells us in today's second reading, many souls were coming to accept it. I wonder why? Not because of the say-so of a bunch of Galilean fishermen, but because of their personal experience that Jesus is truly the Way and Truth and Life.

Since that day, countless others have made the same discovery. In his first encyclical letter Pope Benedict explained that becoming a Christian isn't simply a personal decision we make. Rather, it is an encounter we experience with a person. That person, Jesus, gives life a new horizon and a new direction. Ultimately, the reason we are here today is because Jesus is truly the Way and Truth and Life.

The Second Vatican Council was the initiative of Pope John XXIII, "Good Pope John", as he was popularly known. He had quickly endeared himself to countless souls, whatever their religious affiliation, by his humility and gentle sense of humour.

One night, so the story goes, he was pacing to and fro in his room, weighed down by his heavy responsibilities, when he heard a voice. It was the voice of the Lord: "You go to bed, now, I'll pace up and down for the rest of the night". Whatever the origin of the story, its message is still true because, although life still has its difficulties, Jesus remains our

everlasting hope. As Peter put it in our second reading today, to hope in Jesus is like being called by God out of darkness into his own glorious light.

Sometimes friends say, "I wish I had your faith". As we know, faith is not of our making. It is a sheer gift of God. And that is precisely why we are here today — to make Eucharist, to give thanks to the Father through his Son in the power of the Holy Spirit, the one God, who is our Way and Truth and Life.

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Priests' Training Fund Annual Collection. We will take up the annual diocesan collection this weekend. Please place your donations in the wooden box at the back of the church near the hymn book trolleys. You will find Gift Aid donation envelopes in the narthex. You can use the QR code on the envelope or poster to make your donation online or visit www.rcdow.org.uk/donations. Please note we are unable to accept donations on the Dona card machine for this collection.

Feast of St George, Patron of England, Tuesday 23rd April 2024. We celebrate the Feast of St George at the 9.15am Mass on Tuesday.

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 donation box in the wall at the back of the church.

Jim Gibson RIP. The Funeral will take place on Thursday, 9th May at 12.20 pm at Hanworth Crematorium.

Dr Sue McFarlane RIP. Please pray for the repose of the soul of Sue McFarlane who died recently. Sue was a parishioner of St Michael's for many years before she moved back to her parish closer to her home in Lightwater. The Funeral will take place on **Monday 13th May at 12 noon** at Christ the King Catholic Church, Bagshot.

Baptism Preparation Course. The next Baptism Preparation Course is on Saturday 6th July 2024 at 10.00 am in the presbytery meeting room. If you require the Sacrament of Baptism for your child in July, August and September 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.

Repository. First Holy Communion Ties are now on sale at £5.99 each. Also on sale a selection of Cards, Gifts and Missals at very reasonable prices. Payment is accepted by cash (box in the wall in the Repository) or card (Dona machine in the narthex – select the Repository tab and then enter the amount required to pay). Thank you for your support to the parish.

Ladies Circle. We meet on Thursday 25th April at 8.00 pm in the parish hall for Bingo – please bring plenty of change (£1 coins).

Annual Mass of Thanksgiving for the Sacrament of Matrimony at Westminster Cathedral on Saturday 25th May 2024. Thank you to those who have submitted their details. You will receive an invitation directly from the Diocese.

St Michael's Runners and Walkers - a friendly community group that share advice and encouragement on getting moving. We have 2 key annual events to raise funds for St Michael's School:

Staines 10K Run on Sunday 12th May (entries now closed)

St. Michael's 5K Walk on Saturday 18th May - an inclusive community event, encouraging the whole family to get active. 10:00 am start from St. Michael's School gate. Anyone from St Michael's Community is welcome to join this event, just turn up. Contact StMichaelsRunners@gmail.com for more info or if you wish to join the community.

Our 2024 fundraising page: <https://www.justgiving.com/crowdfunding/2024Minibus>

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

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

Next Sunday's readings, Fifth Sunday of Easter, 28th April

Acts 9: 26-31; 1 John 3; 18-24; John 15; 1-8

Lent and Easter Collections. *In the Sacred Scripture, we read that God loves a generous giver. I thank you for your kind and generous offerings during Lent and at Easter, May the Risen Christ Jesus be your blessings and your treasure. – Fr Sidon*

£1,905.15 for your Clergy on **Easter Sunday**

£1,129.50 for the Holy Places on **Good Friday**

£134.44 for **Lenten Alms** during Lent

Offertory Collection.

Thank you for your offertories last week:

Loose Plate **£549.83**; Envelopes **£163.00**; Standing Orders **£900.00**

Contactless **£129.00** (*The Dona contactless PayPoint is in the narthex*)

MANNA Foodbank. This week's shortages: Fruit Squash; Tinned Custard; Cup a Soup; Cereal/Breakfast Bars; Tinned Potatoes; Tinned Salmon/Sardines/Mackerel etc (we have good stocks of Tuna); Tinned Butter Beans and Kidney Beans; Disposable Razors; Liquid Handwash; Deodorant; Shaving Foam/Gel; Toilet Paper; Toothpaste for 0-2-year-olds; 2 in 1 Shampoo/Shower Gel for Men; Shampoo; Spreads - Jam, Peanut Butter, Chocolate Spread, Marmalade - we are very short Tinned Fruit - we are very short; Crackers - we are very short.

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 get in touch with our parish safeguarding rep, Tiziana Demurtas at 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 21st -28th April

Sun 21st **Fourth Sunday of Easter**

(Saturday Vigil Mass)

06.00pm

Cordelia Oakes intentions

09.15am

Joaquim and Fabio Fernandes – in thanksgiving

11.30am

Richard O'Neill RIP

06.00pm

The people of the parish

09.15am

Fr Carlo's intentions

Mon 22nd

Tues 23rd

St George, Martyr, Patron of England

09.15am

Sheila Hanratty RIP

Wed 24th

Ss Erkenwald and Mellitus

06.00pm

Pascual Maningas RIP

09.15am

Rachel Joseph RIP

Fri 26th

Sat 27th

09.15am

Sun 28th

Fifth Sunday of Easter

(Saturday Vigil Mass)

06.00pm

The people of the parish

09.15am

Greg and Esther's intentions

11.30am

Jim Gibson's intentions

06.00pm

St Michael's Catholic Church

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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