

Message for the 4th Sunday of Easter

Dear Parishioners,

I apologise if this message is longer than usual this week.

During this lockdown, many of you have mentioned these exact or similar words, 'We are grateful for you to helping us in our spiritual needs.'

The gift and ministry of the priesthood helps all of us to remember that even when the physical building of the Church is closed, the heartbeat of the Church – the Sacraments – does not come to an end. Throughout history, in the midst of many disasters, priests have always made themselves available in order to give solace to those in fear, encouragement to those who are downhearted, consolation to those who grieve, and even preparation at the end of life. They have stood side by side with soldiers on the frontline and responders in catastrophes. They have even been there even when someone would be executed, often as a confessor.

Even though we have not been physically present in the past six weeks, we have united in prayer and in encouragement for each other.

But where do priests come from? They are not a special branch of Catholics. We come from every walk of life, whether being a cradle Catholic or not, or even a wanderer from the Church. Some answer quickly to the call. Others take time.

Some in the parish may be called to the priesthood, even if they don't realise it. I ask for families to not only pray for priests but also to encourage it. Let us pray on this Vocations Sunday that there will be more servants in the Lord's vineyard – to live their life of holiness in order to sustained and be sustained in the holiness of everyone else.

I leave you these words my mother found this week:

The most beautiful tabernacle,
the most brilliant monstrance,
the most majestic temple,
is the priest.

The churches of the world
may collapse;
but if a priest is still alive
he will celebrate the Eucharist,
and Christ will make himself
physically present again.

St. John Vianney, Patron of Priests, pray for us.

Fr. Carlos

A Note from the Parish Office Friday 1st May 2020

Bishop's Stortford - St Joseph & The English Martyr <bishopsstortford@rcdow.org.uk>

Fri 5/1/2020 5:57 PM

To: Bishop's Stortford - St Joseph & The English Martyr <bishopsstortford@rcdow.org.uk>

 1 attachments (14 KB)

Message for the Fourth Sunday of Easter - Fr Carlos.docx;

Good afternoon everyone

I hope that you are all keeping well. It's difficult to believe that we are already in the month of May. I apologise in advance, but this is an extremely long email..

Please find attached this week's Sunday Message from Fr Carlos. It has also been uploaded to our website.

Zoom - Last Sunday we had our 9am Mass Zoom session kindly organised by John Wright and our talented Musicians Amy, Clare, David, Dom; Eleanor, Izzy and their families which worked very well. We had a couple of tiny glitches at the start, but this was quickly rectified. It was really lovely again to see so many familiar faces from all three Churches, particularly at the 'Sign of peace', followed after Mass with a cup of tea and a chat.

We also experienced a 'Priestly Zoom-bomb' from Fr Stephen Berecz, who joined us for Mass from New Zealand (just before he went to bed!) which was a great surprise. Fr Stephen was due to visit us during the summer but sadly, this is now not to be.

Being on lockdown without having had a recent haircut has taken its toll. Acknowledging my resemblance to that of an ' Old English Sheepdog' last weekend on a Zoom screen resulted in an immediate DIY family hair cut session using slightly blunt kitchen scissors and clippers. We achieved varying degrees of success, with a bit of wonkiness and a few bald patches here and there which no matter how much you try to flatten or pull the hair down, doesn't quite stretch, but never mind!

Seeing my own face on a video link is really not something I particularly enjoy at all, so, if you too are a little shy or apprehensive about joining in, there is the 'display your name only option' which has a few additional advantages of 1) not having to choose what to wear for Mass and 2) not having to think about displaying a creative or tidy background for all to see!

Whichever option you decide to follow, it will be good to have you with us to celebrate Mass together again this Sunday.

The invitation link from John is below.

The 9am Music Group bring you hymns via Zoom before and after the parish Live Streaming of Mass.

How it works:

- * Different members of the 9am Music Group will lead different hymns before and after Mass.
- * We will start the Meeting about 8:40am to allow people to join and get technology working.
- * Our hymns will start about 8:50am. At the end of Mass we will play a Communion and Exit Hymn.
- * We ask everyone to stay muted during the Mass otherwise your audio will affect others ability to head the priest.
- * Feel free to join with or without video! But if you are on video, we ask that you be appropriately

dressed!

* After the hymns at the end of Mass we will unmute everyone so you can say hello and have a chat about your week.

Thanks everyone and we hope you enjoy a brief sense of community while things are in lock-down.

God bless x
9am Music Group

Topic: Sunday 9am Mass via Zoom during lock-down
Time: May 3, 2020 08:30 AM London

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83522712308>

Meeting ID: 835 2271 2308

Please keep in your thoughts and prayers - the family and friends of Sheila Atherton and Maureen O' Donnell who sadly died during this past week. We also remember all those families who have arranged funerals for their loved ones in difficult circumstances and those who have been unable to attend the service in person, because of the current COVID-19 restrictions.

Eternal rest grant unto them O Lord and let perpetual light shine upon them, may they rest in peace. Amen.

Anniversaries - Many congratulations to Mike and Lin Carroll who recently celebrated their 50th Wedding anniversary. We send you our love and prayers for continued good health and much happiness together.

Marriage Week 2020 - 11th – 17th May is the week that is nationally set aside to celebrate commitment to the Sacrament of Marriage. The theme this year is "*The Forever Conversation*," recognising the need for continual open communication to enable a marriage to be long lasting. Marriage Encounter is working in partnership with Marriage Week UK to promote events and celebrate marriage. For more information see <https://marriage-week.org.uk/>

Praying the Rosary - A letter from the Vatican from Pope Francis

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

The month of May is approaching, a time when the People of God express with particular intensity their love and devotion for the Blessed Virgin Mary. It is traditional in this month to pray the Rosary at home within the family. The restrictions of the pandemic have made us come to appreciate all the more this "family" aspect, also from a spiritual point of view.

For this reason, I want to encourage everyone to rediscover the beauty of praying the Rosary at home in the month of May. This can be done either as a group or individually; you can decide according to your own situations, making the most of both opportunities. The key to doing this is always simplicity, and it is easy also on the internet to find good models of prayers to follow.

I am also providing two prayers to Our Lady that you can recite at the end of the Rosary, and that I myself will pray in the month of May, in spiritual union with all of you.

The two prayers have been uploaded to our web site. For younger Parishioners we have also included another 'Blue Peter style' video craft session of 'How to make a Rosary' (This can be found in our Resource section).

St Mary's School Vacancies - Please see our web site or the school web site www.stmarys.net for details of the following advertised positions, Head of Psychology, a Finance Officer and a part time Leadership Team Admin Assistant.

Domestic Abuse - Since the UK-wide COVID-19 lockdown began on 23 March 2020, there has been a 49% increase in calls and online requests for help. Greater awareness of the scourge of domestic abuse is a positive development as it is the first step towards addressing a serious moral and social problem.

In particular we wish to highlight the need for public education and action regarding domestic violence, especially against women. Such violence includes many forms of non-physical intimidation such as persistent verbal abuse, emotional blackmail and enforced social or financial deprivation. It may occur in any type of close adult relationship.

For those who are experiencing domestic abuse, the home is far from being a place of security and self-fulfilment. Too often it is a place of pain, fear, degradation and isolation.

The most effective way in which Catholics will be able to help men, women and children who are victims of domestic violence is by giving their support to existing groups and projects and by assisting in the spread of awareness and information.

We also have a culture of safeguarding which is part of the life of the Catholic Church in this country.

Domestic abuse is often a hidden problem, and our aim is for anyone experiencing domestic abuse to feel able to have confidence to seek help within the Church setting.

Please see our web site for more information and helplines.

If you are in immediate danger, call 999 and ask for the police.

If you are in danger and unable to talk on the phone, call 999 and listen to the questions from the operator and if possible, respond by coughing or tapping the hand set.

If prompted, press **55 to Make Yourself Heard** and this will transfer your call to the police. (NB Pressing 55 only works on mobiles and does not allow police to track your location.)

A Mass for Migrants on Saturday 2nd May - Each year, near to the Feast of St Joseph the Worker, the migrant communities of Brentwood, Southwark and Westminster gather for a Mass that is full of song, vibrant energy and great joy.

This year, as we can't gather in Church, we will be celebrating the Migrants' Mass using Instagram Live and YouTube on Saturday 2 May, at 10.30am.

The theme for 2020 is:

'You are clapping for us, now pray with us'

We value the incredible contribution of migrants to so many services that are now being recognised and honoured as essential. Many Migrant workers are amongst those on the 'frontline' – in the NHS and care homes; working as delivery drivers, cleaners and caterers. This is a moment to honour them in prayer – especially considering so many are financially vulnerable, working on zero-hours contracts or pay that is below the Real Living Wage.

Please see our web site news section for the You tube and Instagram link for the Mass

Good Shepherd Sunday 3rd May - is the day when we pray for our seminarians and encourage other men to consider the call to the priesthood. The seminaries, Allen Hall, the Venerable English College and the Beda College in Rome, where future Westminster priests are in formation, are physically

closed. Nevertheless, prayer continues in the life of seminarians and staff, and they are able to participate in streamed liturgies. All have on-line lectures, regular conversations with formation staff and spiritual direction. Our seminarians are praying for an end to the pandemic, for the priests serving in the parishes and hospitals, the heroic healthcare staff and care workers, and all who are suffering from this virus. While the present reality lacks the community dimension of formation and the important common liturgical life, their studies and preparation for priesthood continue.

'Please pray for the seminarians and those discerning God's call at this time. May they model through their actions and words the example of Jesus Christ, the Good Shepherd, who came to serve and not to be served.

'Donations to the Priests' Training Fund are always gratefully received. If you wish to make a donation, please visit the donation page.'

<https://rcdow.org.uk/donate/priests-training-fund/>

CAFOD - launched its coronavirus emergency appeal on 30 April. The effects of coronavirus on developing countries where CAFOD works are likely to be devastating. Families without enough to eat and without access to clean water and healthcare are particularly vulnerable to coronavirus. The poorest and most marginalised communities will be pushed further into poverty. Your prayers and gifts are needed now more than ever to help protect the lives of those in poor communities. While we are not able to hold physical collections in our church, you can donate as individuals at cafod.org.uk/coronavirusappeal

VE Day - In light of the current coronavirus outbreak, Bishop's Stortford Town Council's VE day 75 celebrations will be moved online. Follow @bishopsstortfordtc on Facebook on Friday 8 May from 2.50pm to join in the celebrations. Councillors and the local branch of the Royal British Legion will share with us a little bit about VE day as well as reading some poems. A local musician will be playing the last post and reveille and a piper will be playing Battle's O'er and VE DAY 75 (a special piece of music created to mark VE Day). Carole Williams, Town Crier of Bishop's Stortford, will cry the Peace cry written to celebrate VE Day 75.

The Town Council will be asking members of the public to film themselves toasting to WW2 national heroes and will piece together a collage of all the different videos. They will also be asking people to share photos and stories of ancestors who served in the Second World War with #Bishopsstortford #VEDay75.

Parishioners of the week - Mention this week is to the Men folk of our parish in particular Mike Carroll and Martin Curran, members of the Parish Finance committee who during lockdown have continued to help to make the books balance, Patrick Leng from the SVP who has proactively supported those in need and members of the Dad's group (including John, David, Robert and Alistair) who took time to arrange a meeting to pray for us all. We also now have a regular ' online' Parishioner, Chris Basson from Manchester who kindly sends us uplifting cartoons, many of which are now on the Senior Parish Art club page on the web site. Thank you very much to you all for everything that you are doing at this time.

and finally.. some exciting news for anyone, who, if like me, is particularly interested in family ancestry or history of WW1. The following story is a wonderful tale of how our Livestream Mass has helped to unite parishioners of the past with those of the present and hopefully those of the future...

The Man behind the Silhouette - A week or so ago now, an email of thanks was gratefully received for Fr Peter, having been sent by a gentleman, not from this parish, who just happened to choose to

join us for Mass via our Livestream from an advertised list of Churches on the Diocese of Westminster website.

He signed his email with the surname of ' Birdseye'. I recognised the surname as being rather unusual (at first thinking Fish fingers, I must admit!) but then remembering that in WW1 we had a young man in our Parish called Francis Birdseye who was one of 8 Parishioners who tragically lost their lives and whose names are inscribed on a beautiful framed parchment scroll displayed at St Joseph's. The Sanctuary choir stalls were also erected in the memory of the men by the Redemptorist Priests and Parishioners at the time in thanksgiving.

As we took part in the ' There but not there' project, for the WW1 centenary, we have each year since, displayed the 8 glass silhouette figures of those men, in our pews accompanied an engraved glass name block and poppy during the Remembrance Sunday weekend, so that they once more, sit amongst us, as they would have done in the past.

When writing an acknowledgement email back to Mr Birdseye, I added the final line... *' I really hope you don't mind me asking, but, as your surname is quite unusual, I wondered if you happened to be any relation of a Francis Birdseye?'*

The answer came back a few days later confirming that Francis Birdseye was in fact his Great Uncle and that he believed there had been some sort of family association with Bishop's Stortford but he would check with other family members.

The next email we received, a few days after this was accompanied by a plethora of detailed information from various family members including relatives from Canada, along with a regimental photograph of Francis, details of his military service, a character report from his commanding officer, a family tree, Mass cards, medal photographs and so much more which was absolutely fantastic!

We have since been able to link Francis to other past members of the Birdseye family, including tracing an address to Church street being the family home of his brother, Thomas Gregory Birdseye, an accountant by profession, who for over 25 years was actually the organist at St Joseph's and sadly died in 1945 aged 63 years old. His Requiem Mass was celebrated by Fr Campbell and Fr J Hughes, a newspaper cutting giving details of the mourners in attendance and reporting the fact that the Requiem was sung by the Priest Choir and also in attendance was the Vicar of St Michaels , Rev W Mc Carthy. The family were grateful to receive photographs taken by Fr Peter of the property.

Following this development we are now busy creating a separate page on our web site dedicated to 'Parishioners of the past' including Francis Birdseye and the seven other men from the parish. I have managed to trace information on all of them so far by researching a variety of ancestry and military sites most evenings and am now working on tracking down any living relatives and uploading the information that I have to date. I hope to be in a position to release the start of the web page next week.

It will be good to be able to display photographs and some personal information about each man 'behind the silhouette' for this coming Remembrance day, as we continue to learn more about them and honour the sacrifice that they made for all of us.

As always, Fr Peter and Fr Carlos send you their continued love, prayers and good wishes.

Hoping that you all have a really happy, holy and healthy week.

Many thanks

God bless

Debbie

Parish Administrator

(Mon-Fri 9am - 3pm)

Catholic Parish of Bishop's Stortford

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Most Holy Redeemer, Sayesbury Road, Sawbridgeworth*

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Follow our Live streaming on www.churchservices.tv/bishopsstortford

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