



# St. Vincent de Paul (Osterley) Newsletter



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## 12 July 2020

15<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time Yr A Vol. 2 (Pg. 102)

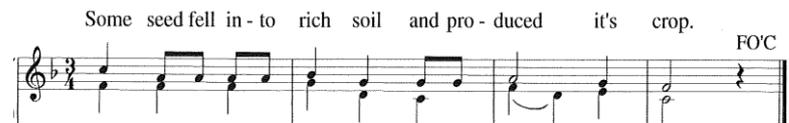
**Isaiah 55:10-11.** **The rain makes the earth give growth.** Like the rain and the snow that provide moisture and life for the growing seed, the Word of God spoken by the prophet causes life to spring up in the community that hears it.

**Romans 8:18-23.** **The whole creation is eagerly waiting for God to reveal his sons.** Paul shares with his readers his glorious vision of the world waiting for its liberation and longing to be set forth from its bondage to decay.

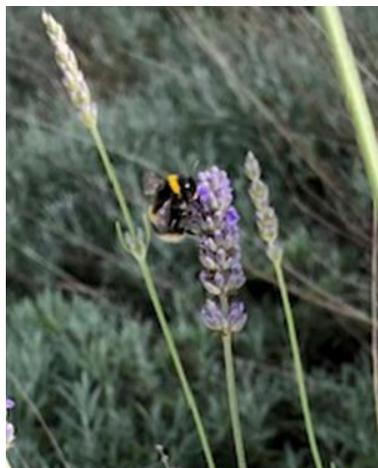
**Matthew 13:1-23.** **A sower went out to sow.** Jesus begins to speak to the crowd in parables by drawing their attention to the sower who casts his seed generously, hoping that it will take root wherever it falls. In the same way, the word he speaks will take root in the soil of the attentive heart.



**PSALM 64:** Some seed fell into rich soil, and produced its crop.



**Fr. Robin Burgess has prepared a homily for today**  
**You can read it on our website in the section entitled 'Homilies/Pastoral Letters' or scroll to the end of this page.**



*The church building is open for individual private prayer (which includes household groups) and for mass. Please check the website each week for opening hours as these change. Procedures are in place which comply with government advice to limit the spread of Covid-19.*

*12<sup>th</sup> July 2020*

Dear Parishioners,

Today we celebrate the fifteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time. In our First Reading the Lord says that just as God brings forth growth on the earth so also does the word of God bring about God's will in our lives.

In the Gospel Jesus explains to the Apostles that his word is a seed which produces a harvest of blessings in our lives but we have to cultivate the soil of our hearts to receive it. The beginnings of the harvest in the parish garden and the work of the bee depicted in the photographs above echo these themes.

For 60 years, since the Second Vatican Council we have been taught that the church is not a building or an institution but is the People of God. This model of the church (and there are others) which we have known in theory has been made very real by the experience of seeing the parish slowly coming back to life as the people return.

Flowers have appeared on the sanctuary, Philip is playing the organ, Readers and Altar Servers are resuming their roles and the people of God are present to answer the prayers of the mass and make manifest the body of Christ.

In the mass each week we are given a rich diet of scripture from both the Old and the New Testament. The priest breaks open God's word in the homily and helps us to understand its meaning for our lives today. It is also clear however that we have to be willing to listen and reflect on scripture and how it relates to my life if we want it to guide and comfort us.

There will be some Sunday masses when the seed of God's word will not find fertile soil in our hearts however when we come to mass regularly someday God's word will find our hearts to be rich soil and we will reap a harvest and produce now a hundredfold, now sixty, now thirty.

As usual for further reflections on today's readings I recommend that you read the homily written by Fr Robin which is at the end of this newsletter.

### **Update on the resumption of Sunday and Weekday mass.**

There is much information about this topic elsewhere in this newsletter which I will not repeat. I just want to emphasise the following:

1. The parish has employed four young part-time cleaners/stewards to clean the church after every service. Having tried it out myself, this work is quite strenuous and given the importance of this task and the training involved (which includes the use of PPE) this seems the most appropriate arrangement.
2. The parish is also thankful for everyone who has volunteered to Steward. Our volunteer stewards complement the work of our paid staff and enables us to open the church for mass and prayer more frequently.
3. Our regular volunteer cleaners will continue to give the church and other buildings their normal cleaning routine.
4. The parish is operating a 2.0 metre social distancing policy which means people are not obliged to wear masks (but may do so if they wish).
5. The parish has carefully calculated the capacity of the church when being filled in a socially distanced way by different sizes of groups. We are gradually increasing the tickets available on the website. For the first four weeks, parishioners can attend one Sunday mass and one weekday mass. In addition to this allowance, parishioners can also book any weekday mass and any Sunday mass if there are still tickets available the day before. This measure

should allow many parishioners to attend Weekday mass and Sunday mass more than once a month.

6. After the first four weeks we anticipate being able to allow each parishioner to book a Sunday mass every three weeks or possibly every two weeks. This will depend on our experience of re-opening the church.
7. We may also investigate whether some provision could be made to broadcast the mass in the hall to accommodate more parishioners or possibly to facilitate parents with small children who need more space than is available in the church.
8. In any case we will only make available a number of tickets consistent with maintaining social distancing.

**Please keep checking the website to learn when these changes will come into place.**

As mentioned elsewhere the church is following all government and diocesan procedures to be as safe as possible. Sometimes pictures say this better than words so I have posted pictures in this newsletter of the following:

1. Battery operated (more to come) and pump action hand sanitizers.
2. One-way system in the church.
3. Touch bins replaced with pedal bins.
4. Seats roped off to maintain 2.0 m distance.
5. No kneeling allowed to maintain social distancing.
6. Hand towels instead of driers.

This is not a complete list but it gives an idea of the practical steps we are taking. The priest will explain any changes to mass as it is celebrated in these early days.

You will also be glad to see that I have posted some more photos of flowers from the parish garden and the church throughout this Newsletter.

**Readers, Altar Servers, Ministers of the Eucharist.**

We thank these ministers for all they do. Currently we are contacting ministers on an ad hoc basis. Over the next few weeks we will be in touch to put rotas in place for these ministers to resume their roles in the liturgy should they be willing to do so. Thank you for your patience.



## Reopening for Mass

You will know from the news that it is permitted to celebrate mass after Saturday the 4<sup>th</sup> July. Bishop Vincent has recorded a message, which you can watch on the diocesan website. You can click on this link to find it [www.rcdow.org.uk](http://www.rcdow.org.uk)

The bishops of England and Wales have also written an important letter about how we are to celebrate mass in these new circumstances. I encourage you to read this letter which can be found beside this newsletter in the Newsletter section of the website.

In the Cardinal's video and the bishop's letter they make it clear that in these extraordinary times the obligation to attend mass remains suspended so no one is obliged to come to mass.

It will be the case however that Catholics want to attend Mass and so it will be necessary to devise a way for people to do so in a way that accords strictly with the government guidelines on social distancing. The factors to consider are as follows:

### Capacity of Osterley Church

The normal capacity of our church is 320 people. Over three masses on a Sunday we have 700 attendees. This works out at 233 people per mass. The parish will be maintaining 2.0 metres social distancing (as far as possible). This means that we can accommodate much less people in each mass.

It is the case that some parishioners will not be able to attend mass due to the need to self-isolate, nonetheless it is clear that we will have to limit the numbers coming to each mass so we can celebrate safely.

It will not be possible for everybody to attend every Sunday so we have published on this website the means by which we are going to ensure that each parishioner can attend Sunday mass once a month and weekday mass (which will have instrumental music and be like a Sunday mass) once a month.



If these arrangements work safely and well, then after the first month we will try to increase the opportunity to go to mass on a Sunday to more than once a month and on a weekday to more than once a month.

### **The Parish needs your help to reopen Stewards – one hour once a month**

We need people to volunteer as stewards in the church. In order to be a steward you must:

1. Be deemed healthy and fit for work and should not be in the group classed as clinically vulnerable (over 70 years or specific pre-existing health conditions), self-isolating or shielding.

Full training will be given and personal protection equipment provided.

If you meet the above criteria and can commit one hour per month on a Sunday to being a steward please e-mail the parish at [osterley@rcdow.org.uk](mailto:osterley@rcdow.org.uk) **OR** ring or text 078 9989 5483 and leave your name and contact details clearly . **Please seriously consider volunteering so that the parish can open safely.**

## **Private Prayer in Church**

Since Monday 15<sup>th</sup> June we have been opening the church each day for individual prayer. It has been good to welcome people back. You can attend with other people who are considered to be part of your household.

The parish has put in place social distancing measures, hygiene precautions and a cleaning regime which complies with Government guidance to limit the spread of Coronavirus.

We have battery operated hand sanitizers and pump action bottles of hand sanitizer. There is a Steward on duty when the church is open to ensure social distancing is observed and cleaning will take place throughout the day. We have posted some new photographs of some of the measures we are taking.

Whilst we look forward to seeing parishioners visiting the church to pray, the obligation to attend weekly mass is still suspended (there is no mass in any case at the moment) and you are not obliged to attend the church for private prayer.

The times for individual prayer change each week (Please see below) so please check the website or newsletter. In addition to reopening for mass permission has been given to have funerals and weddings of no more than 30 people including ministers etc. We, the church wish to play our part in controlling Coronavirus so our leaders will ensure that we observe what social distancing measures are necessary.

## **Confession**

Permission has also been given to advertise times of Confession in Church. Details of this will be published in due course.

## **Planned Giving Boxes**

If parishioners wish to donate to the parish when they visit the church, please do so using the new drop safe in the lobby. This can be used for planned giving envelopes.

We have sent out new boxes of planned giving envelopes (which start from the 12<sup>th</sup> April 2020) by post.

The parish appreciates that the ability of parishioners to contribute to our collections may have been adversely affected by the current pandemic. Please just give what you can.



## **Prayer Resources Online.**

It has been wonderful to see so many resources online for Catholics to use during these times. The link <https://rcdow.org.uk/> brings you to the diocesan website. This has many prayer resources and information on the practical steps being taken by the people of our diocese and by Caritas Westminster to help people in material need. Caritas Westminster was established by Cardinal Vincent using funds donated by parishioners during the “Growing in Faith” campaign which ran in the diocese some years ago.

Once again I send particular greeting to those who are sick or living alone. You are in my thoughts and prayers. We also pray for those who have died, may they rest in peace, and for those who mourn, may God console them.

Whilst we wait patiently to be re-united fully in body as a community, I ask God to bless you all in the following words. (Your response Amen!)

May almighty God bless you.  
The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit

**People:** Amen

## **Times of Opening for Individual Prayer for week commencing the 13<sup>th</sup> July 2020**

Tuesday, Thursday, 11 am -12 noon

Saturday 9 am – 10 am



## **SUNDAY OFFERING AND SUPPORTING THE PARISH:**

Dear Parishioners,

We are conscious that many parishioners may be struggling financially, if however, you are able to continue your weekly donations please see how to do this below:

- 1) On Sunday 5<sup>th</sup> April those who give by planned giving envelopes ran out of envelopes. It is not currently possible to distribute new boxes of envelopes.

If possible, please set up a Standing Order to replace your Planned Giving Envelopes. To see how to do this electronically please See “Donate to our parish” on our website. Should you wish, you can change this back to planned giving envelopes when they are distributed and movement restrictions lifted.

- 2) If you give cash, you can set up a standing order in favour of the parish electronically. For our bank details please see “Donate to our parish” on our website.
- 3) You can use the donation facility on our website to make your donation each week by credit or debit card. See “Donate to our parish” on our website.
- 4) If you do not already do so, you can Gift Aid all your donations. This increases your donation by 25% at no costs to you. You simply have to pay sufficient tax to cover 25% of your donations to the parish. If you do so the government will refund this money direct to the parish. Please follow the instructions on the parish website under “Donate to our parish”

We know that those who are able, will sustain the parish financially during this challenging time and enable us to minister to our parishioners and those in need.

If you have any queries you can contact the parish bookkeeper Steve McEvoy on [osterleybk@rcdow.org.uk](mailto:osterleybk@rcdow.org.uk) or 079 3278 3647. Thank you. *Fr Mark*

**POPE FRANCIS:** Pope Francis called for all Christians to respond to the coronavirus pandemic “with the universality of prayer, of compassion, of tenderness”, adding, “Let us remain united. Let us make our closeness felt toward those persons who are the loneliest”. Speaking after the traditional recitation of the Angelus, the Holy Father called on all Christians to join together in prayer. “In these trying days, while humanity trembles due to the threat of the pandemic, I would like to propose to all Christians that together we lift our voices towards Heaven

**MASS INTENTIONS:** *Mass intentions can still be requested via e-mail or by ringing the parish office. Please leave a message and phone number if there is no reply from the office. Offerings for such masses can be made using the online donation link on the website or submitting it to the parish only when movement restrictions are lifted. Masses offered prior to the reduction in Sunday masses will be allocated to the nearest free mass.*

## SERVICE TIMES & INTENTIONS

12<sup>th</sup> July 2020 – 19<sup>th</sup> July **New Mass Times**

<b>SUNDAY 12<sup>th</sup> July</b> 15 <sup>th</sup> Ordinary Time <b>9.00 am</b>	Laura Sullivan and Alice Hanrahan RIP
Sunday 11.30 am	Mass
Sunday 6.00 pm	Georgette Isseyegh
Tues 14: 7.30 pm Weekday	Thanksgiving Intention Andrew family
Thu 16: 7.30 pm Weekday	Peter and Delfina Faria RIP Birthday Anniv
Saturday 18: 10am Weekday	Thanksgiving Intention Andrew family
<b>SUNDAY 19<sup>th</sup> July</b> 16 <sup>th</sup> Ordinary Time <b>9.00</b>	People of the Parish
Sunday 11.30	Mr and Mrs S. Joseph RIP Anniv
Sunday 6.00	Mass

**CERTIFICATE OF CATHOLIC PRACTICE:** This parish operates a system of Mass Attendance Cards. This is only applicable for parents who wish to send their children to a Catholic primary or secondary school. Attendance at 75% of masses at which stickers are given out will be deemed to comply with the conditions for receiving a Certificate of Catholic practice. Parents can apply to Catholic schools without a Certificate of Catholic practice but will usually be considered after those who possess one. The Certificate of Catholic Practice should be downloaded from our website. (Do not use the form provided by the school). Please print one for every school to which you are applying.

Parents/Guardians should begin collating forms two years before the closing date for their child's application to Nursery, Reception, Secondary and 6<sup>th</sup> Form.

**IMPORTANT UPDATE: Mass attendance stickers were not distributed on Sun. 15/3/2020.**

**REDEMPTORIST PUBLICATIONS** bring the Sunday Holy Mass, celebrated by Fr. Denis McBride into your home every Sunday. Each Sunday service will be accessed at: <https://www.rpbooks.co.uk/holy-mass-online> Visit their BLOG section for a variety of reflections.

**Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.**

### PARISH OFFICE:

Please do not call to the parish office without an appointment. Enquiries can be made by telephone or you can e-mail the parish at [osterley@rcdow.org.uk](mailto:osterley@rcdow.org.uk)

- **PARISH ADMINISTRATOR:** Mrs. L. Faria
- **PLANNED GIVING CO-ORDINATOR:** Mr. Steve McEvoy
- **PARISH BOOKKEEPER:** Mr. Steve McEvoy  
To contact Mr. McEvoy by email: [osterleybk@rcdow.org.uk](mailto:osterleybk@rcdow.org.uk)
- **300 CLUB:** Enquiries to Parish Office.

### ADMIN

- **PARISH WEBSITE ADDRESS FOR ONLINE NEWSLETTER:**  
<https://parish.rcdow.org.uk/osterley/>

• **PARISH REGISTRATION:** Please take a Welcome Pack from the lobby when the church re-opens in due course. Completed Registration and Planned Giving forms should be posted through the door of the Parish house. Thank you.

• **BAPTISM:** Contact Fr. Mark to arrange a baptism date and attend a course. Please complete a form (available in the lobby or online) and submit to the Parish Office. Next course: TBA.  
NB Unfortunately courses are now cancelled until further notice.

They will not be distributed in the near future until further notice. These weeks will be omitted in our calculation of the 75% attendance for school admission

• **MARRIAGES:** 6 months' notice required. Please ring the office for initial discussion with Fr. Mark.

### CONTACTS

• **SAFEGUARDING REP:** Mrs. A. Trigger. Tel. 07764482186  
Email: [osterleysg@safeguardrcdow.org.uk](mailto:osterleysg@safeguardrcdow.org.uk)

• **WEST MIDDX HOSPITAL RC CHAPLAIN:** Tel. 020 8321 5447.

## Homily for the Fifteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time 2020

Fr Robin Burgess writes

Dear Friends,

It was a great relief after three months to be able to have a haircut this week. The hairdresser I go to is also called Robin. He is from Iraq. Once while sitting in the chair having my hair cut a friend of his came into the shop and they talked in a language I did not know. When I asked him afterwards what it was he said, Aramaic, the language of Our Lord.

Jesus and his disciples would have known Hebrew, the language of their religion and its rituals, but in daily life they probably conversed in Aramaic, which is still spoken today in some areas of the Middle East. Jesus used Aramaic in his teaching, in speaking to people about God. It may be that parts of the New Testament such as the Gospels were originally written or composed in Aramaic and only later translated into Greek. There are a few Aramaic words preserved in the Greek Testament, such as *Abba*, which Jesus uses to address his Father, and *Maranatha*, a prayer word that means Come, Lord.

People who study these matters say that Aramaic is very different from modern European languages. It has an earthiness, a rootedness in the natural world, and a kind of open-endedness, so that words often have a variety of meanings that cannot be reduced to one fixed meaning. You can perhaps see why it would be particularly appropriate for the stories told by Jesus that we call parables, which often use illustrations drawn from the natural world and encourage an openness in our understanding of God rather than confining God to a set of single fixed ideas.

Jesus told the people many things in parables, we read one in this Sunday's Gospel. We might wonder why he chooses this way of teaching about God, telling a story with a hidden meaning: why not just tell them directly?

Another method he uses is comparison or analogy: rather than saying the kingdom of God is X, Y, Z, he asks, 'What is the kingdom of God *like*? To what shall we compare it?' This feature of Our Lord's teaching reminds me also that when people ask him questions about God he often does not give a straight answer, but turns the question round. He is quite like the man in a joke who is asked, 'Are you the person who always answers every question with another question?' He replies, 'Who told you that?' Sometimes those who ask Jesus questions do not really want to know the answer. They think they know it already and want him to tell them how great they are, or they are trying to catch him out with trick questions, as he is well aware: should we pay taxes to Caesar or God? and so on. Jesus will not play these little games.

In the parable of the sower and the seed that we hear this Sunday Jesus unusually gives his disciples the key to the story - after a puzzling section in which he seems to be suggesting that the mysteries of the kingdom are not to be imparted to everyone, but only to those who have the ability to accept them. I have often wondered about this, but never been able to fathom it. (Whenever you find something puzzling in Scripture you might look up a commentary and often will find nothing said: this means that none of the scholars know the answer either!). If the people's hearts have grown coarse and hardened, as Jesus says, surely he would want to soften them and help them to understand. There were religions in the ancient world in which the knowledge of God or the gods was kept secret and only divulged to specially initiated people. The Christian religion does have a certain element of this, but on the whole it was and is a religion for everyone. God in Christ makes himself totally available to all people and the only qualification needed to receive him is the desire to do so.

Something we can notice about the parables is that although they use pictures drawn from the natural and human worlds they are not *about* those worlds: no farmer, for instance, would ever scatter his seed all over the place in that careless way, but rather make sure it went into the furrows he had prepared. The parables are first and foremost about the kingdom of God which we can experience here and now in the world in which we live, but which we cannot know here and now totally or completely. God must always go beyond our understanding and cannot be confined within human categories of thinking: he *is* a God who scatters his seed far and wide indiscriminately, because it is his nature to give himself unstintingly, unreservedly, unconditionally to everyone.

I think this is the reason why Jesus uses the open-ended teaching methods of parable and analogy. We cannot understand God fully, but only suggest something of what God is like. Our human words are inadequate to the task, since the nature of God and God's kingdom just cannot be encapsulated in short or simple forms of words. As some say, we cannot know God by thinking, we can only know God in the personal response of love, since God is love.

I believe it is all-important for religion that God should be mystery and that what we are prepared to say about God should always be discreet and provisional. One of the most terrible temptations religious people can face is to think that they have got God properly and fully worked out and know everything about God there is to be known. This supposed privileged knowledge is so often used as a weapon with which to beat others who have a different take on God and can justify any amount of inhuman treatment of other people who do not measure up to our standards or agree with our line. The churches, sad to say, have often thought they were right to persecute and even kill those whom they decided did not hold "correct" views of God. Such are the perversions we are led to if we believe that we, our side, our group has the right ideas and everyone else is wrong. Religious institutions of course are by no means alone in behaving like this.

This does not mean that in relation to God anything goes, we can believe anything we like, but the best and safest assumption we can make is that God is love. We can argue about what exactly this means in each case, but it is surely obvious that thinking we are right to maltreat others we judge to be wrong cannot possibly accord with belief in a loving God. And that is something that can only be known in the actual circumstances of people's lives: our thinking can never be a substitute for the difficult and exacting business of working out what is the loving thing to do in practice. It is our thinking that leads us astray in the way we practice our beliefs.

The first reading on this Sunday from the Old Testament is a short excerpt from chapter 55 of the prophecy of Isaiah which says that God's word is *efficacious*: it carries out what God wills. The previous section is one of my favourite parts of Scripture and I think one of the most important. God says to us, 'My thoughts are not your thoughts, my ways not your ways. Yes, the heavens are as high above earth as my ways are above your ways, my thoughts above your thoughts.' I want to say, thank God for that.

In the pattern of readings, we follow at Sunday Mass the first reading and the Gospel relate to each other in some way, but the second reading follows an independent course through the letters of St. Paul or in Eastertide the Acts of the Apostles. This Sunday we have part of the very fine chapter 8 of Paul's letter to the Romans, in which he speaks of the glorious liberty of the children of God which the whole of creation is destined, in God's design, to share. A vision like this can give us hope to persevere through difficult circumstances knowing that God is always beckoning us onward and leading us further into the heart of his love for us and for all creation. Even Coronavirus cannot prevent the fulfilment of God's plan!

Wishing you every blessing, Fr. Robin

Fr Robin is happy to receive any comments or questions you may have. He can be contacted at [robinburgess@rcdow.org.uk](mailto:robinburgess@rcdow.org.uk)



