

St Thomas More – Parish Newsletter

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Sunday 26th February 2023, First Sunday in Lent (Year A)

From the Homily of Pope Francis on Ash Wednesday

"Behold, now is the favourable time; behold, now is the day of salvation!" (2 Cor 6:2). With these words, the Apostle Paul helps us enter into the spirit of the Lenten season. Lent is indeed the "favourable time" to return to what is essential, to divest ourselves of all that weighs us down, to be reconciled with God, and to rekindle the fire of the Holy Spirit hidden beneath the ashes of our frail humanity. Return to what is essential. It is the season of grace when we put into practice what the Lord asks of us at the beginning of today's first reading: "Return to me with all your heart" (Jl 2:12). Return to what is essential: it is the Lord.

The rite of the imposition of ashes serves as the beginning of this return journey. It exhorts us to do two things: *to return to the truth about ourselves* and *to return to God and to our brothers and sisters*. (...)

How can we do this? To make this journey, to return to the truth about ourselves and to return to God and to others, we are urged to take three great paths: almsgiving, prayer and fasting. These are the traditional ways, and there is no need for novelty. Jesus said it clearly: almsgiving, prayer and fasting. It is not about mere external rites, these

must be actions expressing the renewal of our hearts. Almsgiving is not a hasty gesture performed to ease our conscience, to compensate for our interior imbalance; rather, it is a way of touching the sufferings of the poor with our own hands and heart. Prayer is not a ritual, but a truthful and loving dialogue with the Father. Fasting is not a quaint devotion, but a powerful gesture to remind ourselves what truly matters and what is merely ephemeral. Jesus gives "advice that still retains its salutary value for us: external gestures must always be matched by a sincere heart and consistent behaviour. Indeed, what use is it to tear our garments if our hearts remain distant from the Lord, that is, from goodness and justice?" (*Benedict XVI, Homily for Ash Wednesday, 1 March 2006.*)

All too often, our gestures and rites have no impact on our lives; they remain superficial. Perhaps we perform them only to gain the admiration or esteem of others. Let us remember this: in our personal life, as in the life of the Church, outward displays, human judgments and the world's approval count for nothing; the only thing that truly matters is the truth and love that God himself sees.

If we stand humbly before his gaze, then almsgiving, prayer and fasting will not simply remain outward displays, but will express what we truly are: children of God, brothers and sisters of one another. Almsgiving, charity, will be a sign of our compassion toward those in need, and help us to return to others. Prayer will give voice to our profound

desire to encounter the Father, and will bring us back to him. Fasting will be the spiritual training ground where we joyfully renounce the superfluous things that weigh us down, grow in interior freedom and return to the truth about ourselves. Encounter with the Father, interior freedom, compassion.

Brothers and sisters, let us not neglect the grace of this holy season, but fix our gaze on the cross and set out, responding generously to the powerful promptings of Lent. At the end of the journey, we will encounter with greater joy the Lord of life, we will meet him, who alone can raise us up from our ashes.

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Collections for 29th January to 19th February

Sunday offertory collection: £1,241.15
(Envelopes: £498.14; Loose: £743.01)
Contactless card machine 26th January to 23rd February: £576.23

Grand total: £1,817.38

Many thanks

Magnificat — March and Lent

The March Magnificat (£5) and Lenten companion (£2) are now available to buy. Please ask Maggie, or one of the priests for copies.

Lenten Stations of the Cross

Stations of the Cross will take place in the church every Friday of Lent at 6pm.

Confirmation Classes

Confirmation classes, open to all those who need to receive this Sacrament, continue this Sunday 26th February from 3.30 to 4.30pm in the hall. Please note the final class will take place on Sunday 5th March.

Optional Lent Fast Day and collection for CAFOD

There will be a retiring collection for the work of CAFOD on Sunday 5th March, following the Optional Lent Fast Day on Friday 3rd March.

Mary's Meals Syria Earthquake Appeal

Mary's Meals are working alongside their partner on the ground, Dorcas, to provide emergency support to communities affected in Aleppo and the surrounding area. For more details and to donate, visit their website:

<https://www.marysmeals.org.uk/>

Young Adults Group

A group of young adults (between 21 and 30 years of age) plan to start a monthly social meeting with informal discussions about philosophical, anthropological and sociological questions related to the faith. These will take place monthly in the Parish Hall after the 6pm Sunday Mass.

The first session will take place on Sunday 5th March. Please contact Fr Alvaro (alvaro.tintore@netherhall.org.uk) for further details.

Repository

Items from the repository relating to Lent and Easter will be on sale in the Narthex after the morning Masses on Sunday 5th and 12th March. This was done before Christmas and proved to be popular as the devotional objects for sale are then visible to everyone as they leave church.

Bach's St John Passion

As part of its Lenten devotions, Westminster Cathedral Choir, directed by Simon Johnson, will perform Johann Sebastian Bach's the Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ according to St John on Thursday 16th March at 7.30pm.

Tickets (£45/35/25/15) for this seasonal performance in aid of Westminster Cathedral are available from Ticketmaster. Parishioners can take advantage of a special offer of 50% off ticket prices, please ask Fr Nicholas for details if interested.

From the Fathers of the Church

Part of a homily given by St Augustine of Hippo

Seek, and you shall find (Matt 7:7)

So that you might not think that this was cursorily given, see what He added further, see with what He finished. *Knock, and it shall be opened unto you:* see what He added. He would have you ask that you may receive, and seek that you may find, and knock that you may enter in. Seeing then that our Father knows already what is needful for us, how and why do we ask? Why seek? Why knock? Why weary ourselves in asking, and seeking, and knocking, to instruct Him who knows already?

In another place the words of the Lord are, *Men ought always to pray, and not to faint* (Luke 18:1). If men *ought always to pray*, how does He say, *Use not many words*? How can I always pray, if I so quickly make an end? Here You bid me to finish quickly; there always to pray and not to faint: what does this mean? Now that you understand this, ask, seek, knock. For this reason it is closed, not to shut you out, but to exercise you. Therefore, brethren, we ought to exhort to prayer, both ourselves and you. For we have no other hope amid the manifold evils of this present world than to knock in prayer, to believe and maintain the belief firm in the heart, that your Father does not give you only what He knows is not expedient for you. For you know what you desire; He knows what is good for you.

Imagine yourself under a physician, and in weak health, as is the very truth; for all this life of ours is a weakness; and a long life is nothing else but a prolonged weakness.

Imagine yourself then to be sick under the physician's hand. You have a desire to ask your physician leave to drink a draught of fresh wine. You are not prohibited from asking, for it may chance to do you no harm, or even good to receive it. Do not then hesitate to ask; ask, hesitate not; but if you receive it not, do not take it to heart.

Now if you would act thus in the hands of a man, the physician of the body, how much more in the hands of God, who is the Physician, the Creator, and Restorer, both of your body and soul?

There are then two types of blessings, temporal and eternal. Temporal blessings are health, substance, honour, friends, a home, children, a wife, and the other things of this life in which we are sojourners. We put up then in the hostelry of this life as travellers passing on and not as owners intending to remain. But eternal blessings are, first, eternal life itself, the incorruptibility and immortality of body and soul, the society of Angels, the heavenly city, glory unfailing (cf Matt 17:19-20), Father and fatherland, the former without death, the latter without a foe.

Let us desire these blessings with all eagerness; let us ask with perseverance, not with length of words, but with the witness of groans. Longing desire prays, always, though the tongue be silent. If you are ever longing, you are ever praying.

From Homily 80

St Augustine was born in Tagaste in the north of Africa. He studied philosophy and rhetoric. The process of his conversion is well known to us though his autobiographical book The Confessions. He was already a mature man when he received baptism and started a new life. He went on to become Bishop of Hippo and combined his pastoral duties with writing theological works. His legacy is vast. His homilies often have a conversational style enabling us to easily imagine him preaching to the faithful in his Cathedral church. He died in 430 while Hippo was under siege by the invading vandals.

ST THOMAS MORE CATHOLIC CHURCH

First Sunday in Lent

26th February – 4th March 2023

Tel: 020 7435 1388; <https://parish.rcdow.org.uk/swisscottage/>

	MASS	OTHER ACTIVITIES
SUN 26th February First Sunday in Lent (Readings. Year A)	9.30am Denis Evans (RIP) 11am Mass Rita Rogan (intentions) 6pm Mass People of the Parish	The Church opens at 9.15am 10.30am Confessions 3.30pm - 4.30pm Confirmation class 3 5.30pm Confessions
MON 27th February Lent feria (St Gregory of Narek)	7am Mass For the victims of the Turkish/Syrian earthquakes 10am Mass Ify and Nonso Osakwe (in Thanksgiving)	The Church opens at 6.50am (Monday to Friday)
TUE 28th February Lent feria	7am Mass Marie Sobotta-Tabet (RIP) 10am Mass Vicky Czerszewska (intentions)	
WED 1st March ST DAVID, Bishop, Patron of Wales	7am Mass Carmine Albano (intentions) 10am Mass Margaret Flood (intentions)	
THU 2nd March Lent feria	7am Mass For Peace in Ukraine 10am Mass Mary and Joseph Power (RIP)	
FRI 3rd March Lent feria Friday abstinence	7am Mass Joe Manighetti (intentions) 10am Mass Arthur Gibson (RIP)	10am – 12pm Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament 6pm Stations of the Cross
SAT 4th March Lent feria (St Casimir)	10am Mass Veronica O' Farrell (RIP)	The Church opens at 9.30am

Prayer Intentions:

Recently deceased: Mike Cipolla; Michael Crook; Pope Benedict XVI; Angela Carpos; John Stopplecamp; Wendy Bellas; Irene O'Sullivan; Peter Glenn; Joseph Power

Anniversary: Mark Sharman; Elizabeth Covenden; Maria Fernanda; Simon Ulcickas; Nick Aldridge; Mabel Bull; Sofia Vukusic; Maroun Ramia; Irene Cole; Iris Nally

Confessions:

Monday to Friday (before and after 10am Mass)

Saturday: before and after 10am Mass

Sunday: 10.30am and 5.30pm (before Mass)

Forthcoming Events:

17th March: St PATRICK, Patron of Ireland

20th March: ST JOSEPH, Spouse of the Blessed Virgin Mary