

# St Thomas More – Parish Newsletter

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## Sunday 19th March 2023, Fourth Sunday in Lent (Year A)

*From Pope Francis' General Audience, St Peter's Square, Wednesday 15th March about the passion for evangelization and the apostolic zeal of the believer*

The word "apostle" reminds us of the group of the Twelve disciples chosen by Jesus. At times we refer to some saint, or more generally the bishops, as "apostles": they are apostles, because they go in the name of Jesus. But are we aware that being apostles concerns every Christian? Are we aware that it concerns each one of us? Indeed, we are required *to be apostles* – that is, envoys – *in a Church* that, in the Creed, we profess as *apostolic*.

So, what does it mean to be apostles? It means being *sent for a mission*. The event in which the Risen Christ sends his apostles into the world, passing on to them the power he himself received from the Father and giving them His Spirit, is exemplary and foundational. We read in the Gospel of John: "Jesus said to them again, 'Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me even so I send you'. And when he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, 'Receive the Holy Spirit'" (20:21-22).

Another fundamental aspect of being an apostle is the *vocation*, that is, the calling. It has been thus ever since the beginning, when the Lord Jesus "called to him those whom he desired; and they

came to him" (Mk 3:13). He constituted them as a group, attributing to them the title of "apostle", so they would come with him and send them on their mission (cf. Mk 3:14; Mt 10:1-42). Saint Paul, in his letters, presents himself as "Paul, called by the will of God to be an apostle", that is, an envoy (1 Cor 1:1), and again, "Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle" (Rm 1:1). And he insists on the fact that he is "an apostle not from men nor through man, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father, who raised him from the dead" (Ga/ 1:1); God called him from his mother's womb to proclaim the gospel among the nations (cf. Ga/ 1:15-16).

The experience of the Twelve apostles and the testimony of Paul also challenges us today. They invite us to verify our attitudes, to verify our choices, our decisions, on the basis of these fixed points: everything depends on a gratuitous call from God; God also chooses us for services that at times seem to exceed our capacities or do not correspond to our expectations; the call received as a gratuitous gift must be answered gratuitously.

Within the framework of the unity of the mission, the diversity of charisms and ministries must not give rise, within the ecclesial body, to privileged categories: here there is not a promotion, and when you conceive of Christian life as a promotion, that the one who is above commands all the others because he has succeeded in climbing, this is not Christianity. This is pure paganism. The Christian vocation is not a promotion, so

as to rise, no! It is something else. It is a great thing because, although by the will of Christ some are in an important position, perhaps, doctors, "pastors and dispensers of mysteries on behalf of others, yet all share a true equality with regard to the dignity and to the activity common to all the faithful for the building up of the Body of Christ" ([LG](#), 32). Who has more dignity in the Church: the bishop, the priest? No, we are all Christians in the service of others. Who is more important in the Church: the religious sister or the common person, baptised, not baptised, the child, the bishop...? They are all equal, we are equal and one of the parties believes themselves to be more important than the others, turning up their nose, it is a mistake. That is not the vocation of Jesus. The vocation that Jesus gives, to everyone, but also to those who seem to be in the highest places, is service, serving others, humbling oneself. If you find a person who in the Church has a higher vocation and you see he is vain, say, "Poor soul", pray for him, because he has not understood what the vocation of God is. The vocation of God is adoration of the Father, love for the community, and service. This is what being apostles is, this is the witness of apostles.

The matter of equality in dignity asks us to rethink many aspects of our relations, which are decisive for evangelisation. For example, are we aware of the fact that with our words we can undermine the dignity of people, thus ruining relationships within the Church? While we try to engage in dialogue with the world, do we also know how to dialogue among ourselves as believers? Or in the parish, one person goes against another, one speaks badly of another in order to climb up further? Do we know how to listen to understand another person's reasons, or do we impose ourselves, perhaps even with appeasing words? To listen, to be humble, to be at the service of others: this is *serving*, this is being Christian, this is being an apostle.

Dear brothers and sisters, let us not be afraid to ask these questions. Let us shun vanity, the vanity of positions. These words can help us to confirm how we live our baptismal vocation, how we live our way of being apostles in an apostolic Church, which is at the service of others. Thank you.

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### **Lenten Stations of the Cross**

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

### **Magnificat — March and Lent**

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

### **Film Club**

On Thursday 23rd March after the 10am Mass, the Film Club will show a film entitled *Ocean of Mercy* about St John Paul II, St Faustina and St Maximilian Kolbe. Please sign the list in the Narthex if you would like to attend.

### **Gift Aid and Planned Giving**

We are currently preparing the new boxes of envelopes for the next tax year starting on 9<sup>th</sup> April. If there has been any change in your situation (new address, change in tax status, change of name), please kindly contact our Finance Officer, Yolaine, at: [swisscottagefin@rcdow.org.uk](mailto:swisscottagefin@rcdow.org.uk) as soon as possible.

If you are a UK Income or Capital Gains Taxpayer, please sign a Gift Aid Declaration and support our parish in this free, easy way (donating either via online transfers to the parish bank account, standing order, weekly envelopes or using the Contactless devices). Gift Aid means our parish can claim an extra 25p for every £1 you donate, at no extra cost to you. Thank you!

### **Young Adults Group**

A group of young adults (between 21 and 30 years of age) have started 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. Please contact Fr Alvaro for further details: (alvaro.tintore@netherhall.org.uk)

### **The Cardinal's Lenten Appeal**

Funds raised this year will be shared between Marriage and Family Life, Youth and Evangelisation, the Education Service and Caritas Westminster. As well as initiatives run by parishes around the diocese. See the poster in the Narthex. We will use the collection box below the candles in the St Thomas Chapel for this purpose during Lent.

### **Mid Lent Morning of Recollection for Women**

This will take place on Tuesday, 21st March after 10am Mass to 12.40pm including a time for Eucharistic adoration; a time set aside to look at our lives in God's presence. It is followed by coffee in the Hall. You are welcome for all or part of it.

### **Some considerations about this Sunday's Gospel: the man born blind and healed by Jesus.**

*From a homily by St Josemaría Escrivá (from his published homily Christian Respect for Persons and their Freedom)*

*And Jesus saw, says the holy Gospel, as he passed on his way, a man who had been blind from his birth (Jn 9:1). Jesus is passing by. How often have I marvelled at his simple way of describing divine mercy! Jesus is headed somewhere, yet he is not too busy to spot human suffering. Consider, on the other hand, how different was the reaction of his disciples. They ask him: Master, was this man guilty of sin, or was it his parents, that he should have been born blind? (Jn 9:2).*

We cannot be surprised that many people, even those who think themselves Christians, act in the same way. Their first impulse is to think badly of someone or something. They don't need any proof; they take it for granted. And they don't keep it to themselves, they air their snap judgements to the winds.

To my mind frequently comes the reply of the man born blind who was asked by the Pharisees for the umpteenth time how the miracle had taken place: *I have told you already, and you would not listen to me. Why must you hear it over again? Would you too become his disciples? (Jn 9:27)*

The sin of the Pharisees did not consist in not seeing God in Christ, but in voluntarily shutting themselves up within themselves, in not letting Jesus, who is the light, open their eyes (cf Jn 9:39-41). This closed-mindedness immediately affects our relations with others. (...) If we let our Lord apply the clay which, in his hands, becomes a cleansing salve, we shall come to know earthly realities and we shall look upon the divine realities with new vision, with the light of faith. Our outlook will have become Christian. This is the vocation of a Christian. We are called to the fullness of charity which *is patient, is kind* (I Cor 13:4)

I hope we will be able to derive some very practical consequences from this conversation with God. Let us especially resolve not to judge others, not to doubt their good will, to drown evil in an abundance of good, sowing loyal friendship, justice and peace all around us.

Let us resolve never to become sad if our upright conduct is misunderstood by others; if the good which, with the continuous help of our Lord, we try to accomplish is misinterpreted by others, who delight in unjustly guessing at our motives and accuse us of wicked designs and deceitful behaviour.

Let us forgive always, with a smile on our lips. Let us speak clearly, without hard feelings, when in conscience we think we ought to speak. And let us leave everything in the hands of our Father God, with a divine silence—*Jesus was silent* (Mt 26:63)—if we are confronted with personal attacks, no matter how brutal and shameful they might be. Let us concern ourselves only with doing good deeds. God will see to it that *they shine before men* (Mt 5:16)

**ST THOMAS MORE CATHOLIC CHURCH****Fourth Sunday in Lent**19<sup>th</sup> March – 25<sup>th</sup> March 2023Tel: 020 7435 1388; <https://parish.rcdow.org.uk/swisscottage/>

	<b>MASS</b>	<b>OTHER ACTIVITIES</b>
<b>SUN 19<sup>th</sup> March</b> Fourth Sunday in Lent Laetere Sunday (Readings. Year A)  Mothers' Day	<b>9.30am</b> People of the Parish <b>11am Mass</b> Joan Ross (intentions) <b>6pm Mass</b> For mothers in the Parish	The Church opens at 9.15am <b>10.30am</b> Confessions <b>5.30pm</b> Confessions
<b>MON 20<sup>th</sup> March</b> <b>ST JOSEPH, Spouse of the Blessed Virgin Mary</b>	<b>7am Mass</b> Richard F Pearson (RIP) <b>10am Mass</b> Cindy Owens (intentions)	The Church opens at 6.50am (Monday to Friday)
<b>TUE 21<sup>st</sup> March</b> Lent feria	<b>7am Mass</b> Helen Birch (RIP) <b>10am Mass</b> For victims of Turkish/Syria earthquakes	<b>10.45am</b> Ladies' recollection
<b>WED 22<sup>nd</sup> March</b> Lent feria	<b>7am Mass</b> For Peace in Ukraine <b>10am Mass</b> Persecuted Christians	
<b>THU 23<sup>rd</sup> March</b> Lent feria (St Turbicus of Mogrovejo, Bishop)	<b>7am Mass</b> Carmine Albano (intentions) <b>10am Mass</b> Jack Nally (RIP)	<b>10.45am</b> Film Club – Ocean of Mercy: St John Paul II, St Faustina and St Maximilian Kolbe
<b>FRI 24<sup>th</sup> March</b> Lent feria <b>Friday abstinence</b>	<b>7am Mass</b> For all those sick in the Parish <b>10am Mass</b> Maria Isabel Bates (intentions)	<b>10am – 12pm</b> Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament <b>6pm</b> Stations of the Cross
<b>SAT 25<sup>th</sup> March</b> <b>THE ANNUNCIATION OF THE LORD</b>	<b>10am Mass</b> Mary Flavin (intentions)	The Church opens at 9.30am

**Prayer Intentions:**

**Recently deceased:** Michael Crook; Pope Benedict XVI; Angela Carpos; John Stopplecamp; Wendy Bellas; Peter Glenn; Joseph Power; Ghislaine Williams; Helen Birch

**Anniversary:** Sofia Vukusic; Maroun Ramia; Irene Cole; Iris Nally; Veronica O'Farrell

**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:**

**2<sup>nd</sup> April: PALM SUNDAY OF THE PASSION OF THE LORD**  
**6<sup>th</sup> April: MAUNDY THURSDAY**  
**7<sup>th</sup> April: GOOD FRIDAY**  
**8<sup>th</sup> April: HOLY SATURDAY**  
**9<sup>th</sup> April: EASTER SUNDAY OF THE RESURRECTION**