

St Thomas More – Parish Newsletter

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Sunday 26th March 2023, Fifth Sunday in Lent (Year A)

A reading for Lent from a Homily of Pope Francis back in March 2014 in which he comments on this Sunday's Gospel.

The Gospel of this Fifth Sunday of Lent tells us of the resurrection of Lazarus. It is the culmination of the miraculous "signs" worked by Jesus: this act is too great, too clearly divine to be tolerated by the high priests, who, learning of the fact, decided to kill Jesus (cf. Jn 11:53).

Lazarus had already been dead four days, before Jesus arrived; and what he said to the sisters Martha and Mary is engraved forever in the memory of the Christian community. Jesus speaks like this: "I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and whoever lives and believes in me shall never die" (Jn 11:25, 26). With this word of the Lord we believe that the life of whoever believes in Jesus and follows his Commandment after death will be transformed into new life, full and immortal. As Jesus is resurrected with his own body, though he does not return to an earthly life, so too will we be raised with our bodies which will have been transfigured into glorified bodies. He expects us with the Father, and by the power of the Holy Spirit, who raised him, he will also raise those who are united to him.

Before the sealed tomb of his friend Lazarus, Jesus "cried with a loud voice:

'Lazarus, come out!'. And the dead man came out, his hands and feet bound with bandages, and his face wrapped with a cloth" (vv. 43-44). This cry is an imperative to all men, because we are all marked by death, all of us; it is the voice of the One who is master of life and wants that we all may "have it abundantly" (Jn 10:10). Christ is not resigned to the tombs that we have built for ourselves with our choice for evil and death, with our errors, with our sins. He is not resigned to this! He invites us, almost orders us, to come out of the tomb in which our sins have buried us. He calls us insistently to come out of the darkness of that prison in which we are enclosed, content with a false, selfish and mediocre life. "Come out!", he says to us, "Come out!". It is an invitation to true freedom, to allow ourselves to be seized by these words of Jesus who repeats them to each one of us today. It is an invitation to let ourselves be freed from the "bandages", from the bandages of pride. For pride makes of us slaves, slaves to ourselves, slaves to so many idols, so many things. Our resurrection begins here: when we decide to obey Jesus' command by coming out into the light, into life; when the mask falls from our face — we are frequently masked by sin, the mask must fall off! — and we find again the courage of our original face, created in the image and likeness of God.

Jesus' act of raising Lazarus shows the extent to which the power of God's grace can go, and, thus, the extent of our conversion, our transformation. Listen carefully: there is no limit to the divine mercy offered to everyone! There is no limit to divine mercy which is offered to everyone! Remember this sentence. And we can all say it together: "there is no limit to divine mercy which is offered to all

people!". Let us say it together: "There is no limit to divine mercy which is offered to everyone!". The Lord is always ready to remove the tombstone of our sins, which keep us apart from him, the light of the living.

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Lenten Stations of the Cross

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

Magnificat — April

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

Film Club

On Thursday 30th March after the 10am Mass, the Film Club will show a film about St Bernadette. 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 9th 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 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.

HOLY WEEK 2023

2nd April - Palm Sunday:

Masses: 9.30am, 11am and 6.00pm

6th April - Maundy Thursday:

N.B. There is no 7am or 10am Mass today

8.00pm Mass of the Lord's Supper. Adoration before the Blessed Sacrament until 10.30pm

7th April - Good Friday:

10.00am Way of the Cross

3.00pm Liturgy of the Lord's Passion

8th April - Holy Saturday:

3.00pm Blessing of Easter Baskets

8.30pm Easter Vigil

9th April - Easter Sunday

9.30am Easter Day Mass

11.00am Easter Day Mass

N.B. There is no 6pm Mass today

10th April - Easter Monday (Bank Holiday)

10.00am Mass

N.B. There will be no 7am Mass from Monday 10th to Friday 14th April

Confessions:

Apart from the usual times:

Good Friday: From 2.30pm

Holy Saturday: 11.30am to 1.00pm

Excerpts from a statement about recent legislation by Bishop John Sherrington

Bishop John Sherrington, Auxiliary Bishop of Westminster and Lead Bishop for Life Issues on the Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales, has condemned Clause 10 of the new Public Order Bill, reiterating concerns it will lead to the curtailment of freedom of speech for people of faith.

The clause, set to be signed into law, criminalises a range of activities within a 150m perimeter of an abortion facility, otherwise known as a 'buffer zone'. (...)

The bishops hold religious freedom to be essential for the flourishing and the realisation of the dignity of every human person, and recognise it as the foundational freedom of any free and democratic society. It is a fundamental right, held by the Church to be 'the source and synthesis of rights... understood as the right to live in the truth of one's faith and in conformity with one's transcendent dignity as a person.' This includes the right to manifest one's beliefs in public including through witness, the raising of one's mind and heart to God in prayer and charitable outreach. Yet this new law potentially inhibits this, restricting freedom of thought, conscience and religion.

Pope Francis has reminded us that 'a healthy pluralism, one which genuinely respects differences and values them as such, does not entail privatising religions in an attempt to reduce them to the quiet obscurity of the individual's conscience or to relegate them to the enclosed precincts of churches, synagogues or mosques. This would represent, in effect, a new form of discrimination and authoritarianism.' We lament that prayer, holding certain views or peacefully witnessing to the Gospel of Life in certain 'zones' across these lands may now be a criminal offence.

Guidance on Church Teaching

(...) As Christians we are called to 'Love the Lord our God with all our heart, with all our mind and with all our soul and to love our neighbour as ourself.' This Commandment sums up man's duties toward God and is the fundamental reference point for all those striving to follow Jesus. This new law potentially strikes at the heart of being able to respond to this call and duty. (...)

Jesus exhorts his followers to 'pray at all times' and the Catechism reminds us that prayer 'ought to animate us at every moment'. It also reminds us that 'the intercession of Christians recognises no boundaries.' Christian prayer cannot be confined to places of worship or the privacy of one's own

home. Whilst Christian prayer is 'anchored in liturgy', Pope Francis reminds us that 'it always returns into daily life... on the streets, in offices, on public transportation... and there it continues the dialogue with God.' Not only is it right and good to pray for the coming of the kingdom of justice and peace, but 'it is just as important to bring the help of prayer into humble, everyday situations.' In each moment of every day, Christians are called to prayer. (...)

The Church has consistently taught that charity or 'love of neighbour' is 'an indispensable expression of her very being' that it is a love which 'extends beyond the frontiers of the Church' and that it is 'first and foremost a responsibility for each individual member of the faithful' as well as 'a responsibility for the entire ecclesial community.' (...)

We are called to love our neighbour with a special regard for the most vulnerable and the poorest amongst us. Who can be more vulnerable than a baby in the womb? As Catholics we hold that life is sacred from the first moment of conception and that harming, attacking, or denying life in these circumstances is completely foreign to the religious and cultural way of thinking of the People of God. Therefore, the defence and promotion of life, the reverencing and loving of life, is a task which God entrusts to every man and woman. For decades, since the inception of the Abortion Act 1967, Catholics have been engaged in peaceful and often silent witness to the dignity of human life outside the places where over 10 million unborn lives have been taken. It is on this modern day 'periphery' that Catholics feel a strong call to witness through peaceful presence to the sanctity of life and the injustice of abortion(...)

Love of neighbour motivates Christians to offer practical help to those most in need. As disciples of Jesus, we are called to become neighbours to everyone, especially those who are most alone and most in need. Love of Christ and love of neighbour are fundamental aspects of the Christian life and inspire and underpin all our charitable outreach as a Church. Sharing in Christ's mission, the Church is clear that our support and promotion of human life must be accomplished through the service of charity, which finds expression in personal witness [and] various forms of volunteer work...' Throughout his Pontificate, Pope Francis has exhorted Catholics to head out to the margins of society, the places of great need, desperation, crisis, isolation, misery and abandonment.[26] It is in those marginal places, that Christians are especially called to love Christ and to serve him by serving those most in need.(...) Where there is need, Christ bids us to serve.

ST THOMAS MORE CATHOLIC CHURCH

Fifth Sunday in Lent

26th March – 1st April 2023

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

| | MASS | OTHER ACTIVITIES |
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| SUN 26th March Fifth Sunday in Lent (Readings. Year A) | 9.30am People of the Parish 11am Mass Joan Ross (intentions) 6pm Mass For peace in Ukraine | The Church opens at 9.15am 10.30am Confessions 5.30pm Confessions |
| MON 27th March Lent feria | 7am Mass Anita Tayar Tabet (intentions) 10am Mass Alice Hancock (RIP) | The Church opens at 6.50am (Monday to Friday) |
| TUE 28th March Lent feria | 7am Mass Marie Sobotta-Tabet (RIP) 10am Mass Mr and Mrs P Benz (intentions) | |
| WED 29th March Lent feria | 7am Mass Helen Birch (RIP) 10am Mass Carmine Albano (intentions) | |
| THU 30th March Lent feria | 7am Mass For all those sick in the Parish 10am Mass Mick Morris Tabet (intentions) | 10.45am Film Club – St Bernadette |
| FRI 31st March Lent feria Friday abstinence | 7am Mass David Ainsworth (RIP) 10am Mass Helen Conlon (RIP) | 10am – 12pm Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament 6pm Stations of the Cross |
| SAT 1st April Lent feria | 10am Mass Alex Bento (RIP) | 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; Alice Hancock

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:

2nd April: PALM SUNDAY OF THE PASSION OF THE LORD

6th April: MAUNDY THURSDAY

7th April: GOOD FRIDAY

8th April: HOLY SATURDAY

9th April: EASTER SUNDAY OF THE RESURRECTION