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St Gregory the Great

**Easter Sunday
12th April 2020**



Dear brothers and sisters in our risen Lord, the Lord is risen, God lives, allelulia!

Here are a few reflections on the Easter Triduum that we are celebrating.

HOLY THURSDAY

This evening we begin our celebration of Our Lord's Death and Resurrection, the paschal mystery in the Easter Triduum. This is the climax of the church's liturgical year with the three great ceremonies – The Mass of the Lord's Supper, the Solemn Good Friday Liturgy and the Easter Vigil. We celebrate together the central mystery of our faith and in this evening's mass of the Lord's Supper we celebrate the very first mass and the gift of this wonderful sacrament of the eucharist, by which Our Lord's death and resurrection is remembered and made real and present in every age and in every place. "Behold I am with you to the end of days" Jesus promised us and he is with us forever primarily in the Mass – in the Blessed Sacrament, the bread and wine transformed into his Body and Blood. We do this in remembrance of Christ and in union with Christ.

We cannot do this together this year or with the usual solemnity but our absence from each other, from the Mass and from Holy Communion hopefully will make us appreciate this miraculous gift even more fully and deepen our love for it, for each other and for the God who blessed us with it. Personally, the current sacramental shut down has brought

enormous privilege and a joy , but they are at all times for all of us an enormous privilege and joy and hopefully when the current nightmare is over and we are able once more to celebrate together physically, we will appreciate and love the Mass more than ever. Absence makes the heart grow fonder and this will be truer than ever with the Mass and with each other.

This Maundy Thursday Mass is always a poignant celebration and because of the circumstances this year for our world, it's particularly poignant. On this night Our Blessed Lord knew that the next day the people he had created, gathered and loved would turn brutally against him. His nearest and dearest would betray and desert him and he knew what horrors of torture and death awaited him as he would bear the terrible weight of human sin and total abandonment on the cross. Yet knowing all of this at the very lowest moment of his life, he gave himself utterly to the world, his disciples and us in undying love forever. In Gethsemane he would have been drained in the darkness of what he had given in the Mass and what he was to give on the cross, and by his disciples and our disobedience, indifference and weaknesses.

The readings of this evenings Mass remind us that the Mass is our Passover, the sacrifice that saved us from sin, sins punishment and death and the rite that from the earliest times has defined God's people. It is also St. Paul tells us, our memorial of Christ, and as we proclaim in the responsorial psalm, 'The blessing-cup that we bless is a communion with the Blood of Christ.' The Passover memorial of Christ perpetuates his death and resurrection forever. Every Sunday we celebrate it to honour God's sabbath and to support each other in our faith. "This day is to be a day of remembrance for you, and you must celebrate it as a feast in the Lord's honour. For all generations you are to declare it a day of festival forever."

In the gospel our Lord performs the action which embodies his death and resurrection. He washes his disciples' feet. "He had always loved those who were his in the world, but now he showed how perfect his love was." He did this through dying for us but also through serving us. In this act of supreme humility almighty God showed us how we are to live, in humble service of each other. "I have given you an example so that you may copy what I have done to you." Our blessed Lord calls us to humble, loving service of each other, the sort of service we are thankfully seeing all around us at the moment in care for each other, in the growing service of community and in the heroic sacrifice of so many. In the midst of the current crisis we are re-discovering a central Christian truth that in dying to ourselves in loving service of others we rise to new and better life. As we share in Our Blessed Lord's death and resurrection this Easter in every Mass through our loving service of our families and neighbours, particularly those most in need, may we all rise to new and better lives, to a new and better nation and world and to real human solidarity and fulfilment and joy.

GOOD FRIDAY

The crucifixion was Our Blessed Lord's supreme act of loving service as he lay down his life for us on the cross. There he was utterly abandoned, utterly alone. It was a horrible agonising death, a death reserved for the very worst criminals and for traitors and slaves. And of course, it was totally undeserved. Jesus was completely innocent, the finest human being who ever lived, full of an overwhelming love for the entire human race. Yet his people whom he had created and cared for for centuries, hated and killed him. The contrast between God's love and humanity's ingratitude is beautifully and painfully expressed in the Reproaches. Like so many victims of the current awful pandemic Jesus suffocated and died alone. Although he was God, this did not make him immune to suffering. As a man he suffered more than anyone, not just for us but with us and continues to do so in all who are suffering. God is not outside human pain or indifferent to it, indeed he is at its very heart. That is where the cross stood and continues to stand. In today's first reading, a prophecy of the passion from Isaiah we are told that he was "a man of sorrows and familiar with suffering - acquainted with grief. Ours were the sufferings he bore, ours the sorrows he carried. On him lies a punishment that brings us peace, and through his wounds we are healed." He was crushed with suffering. He knows and understands our pain, our struggles and our weaknesses or as the second reading to the Hebrews

can learn through suffering. It can bring out the very best in human nature, as we see at the moment, and make us into better people.

In Jerusalem the way of the cross which Jesus took runs straight through the bustle and business of the city centre. It has an important lesson for us which the following poem expresses.

THE WAY OF THE CROSS

Not distant, high up and apart

Above great walls and glistening temple dome in quiet sacred otherness, But down here close, below Within the heaving market place, Lost in the twisted muddle of human life Lies the way, Amidst human muddle and human mess, Business, bemusement and indifference, Amidst noisy profane this ness, The cross goes stumbling through.

As we venerate the cross in our own homes lets ask Mary our mother, who shared so intimately and so fully in our Lords grief help us to bear and grow through our present trials, and to feel this Good Friday as she felt. In the words of the Stabat Mater;

O thou mother! Fount of love!
Touch my spirit from above,
Make my soul to glow and melt
With the love of Christ my Lord.

FINAL PRAYER AND BLESSING

May abundant blessing, O Lord we pray,
Descend upon your people,
Who have honoured the death of your Son
In the hope of their resurrection:
May pardon come,
Comfort be given,
Holy faith increase,
And everlasting redemption be made secure.
Through Christ our Lord. Amen

EASTER

For Peter and John, the two disciples closest to Jesus, the penny dropped rather late. It was only on the discovery of the empty tomb that they realised that, as scripture had prophesied, it was inevitable that Jesus would suffer and die, just as it is inevitable that each one of us should suffer and die. As Shakespeare wrote, "all that lives must die, passing through nature to eternity". Suffering and death are an inescapable part of human existence and for most people that's a rather depressing prospect. Thankfully the resurrection has totally transformed that prospect. Suffering and death have been overcome by our Lords rising and all human life totally changed. When he was raised from the dead so were all of us. The worlds greatest tragedy, the killing of it's creator, has become it's greatest triumph in his gift of eternal life to the world. Jesus has conquered death and unlocked for us the path to eternity. The gates of heaven have been thrown open for us. Living has become infinitely more hopeful, more positive, greater and richer. We have a new and far more beautiful vision of ourselves and our universe. The resurrection is the restoration of life itself. As we pray in today's opening prayer, may we who keep the solemnity of the Lords Resurrection, through the renewal brought by your spirit, rise up in the light of life.

Today, above all days, despite the horrors of the crucifixion and the current pandemic, is a day for rejoicing. We

by rising restored our life. A Christian is essentially a joyful witness to the resurrection, as Peter reminds Cornelius in the first reading. "We are those witnesses- we have eaten and drunk with him after his resurrection from the dead". We do this every Sunday at mass. Every Sunday is an Easter Sunday, a celebration of the resurrection. Every Sunday is a joyful celebration of hope, hope for now and for hereafter. Hope that all the deepest desires of our hearts will be fulfilled. Hope for forgiveness, for justice, happiness and peace. Hope that this dreadful pandemic will pass, as it did for the Jews at the first Passover. "When I see the blood I will pass over you and you will escape the destroying plague when I strike the land of Egypt". Hope in the one who became for all the source of eternal salvation. Hope in the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come. As St Paul reminds us in the letter to the Romans, "The sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing to the glory that is to be revealed to us".(8:18) Heaven outweighs everything. Because of the resurrection "we come through all these things triumphantly, victoriously, by the power of him who loved us".(8:37). Absolutely nothing whatever will be able to separate us from the love of God, known to us in Christ Jesus our Lord. (8:39).

THE HOLY SEPULCHRE

It is the opposite of what it seems.

Dark and dungeon-like, Introvert and imprisoned, It is a tomb.

A vast and lofty dome shuts out the sky. A mini-fort cum bank-vault Shields, bomb-shelter and bunker-like , the gem.

A fanfare of paschal candles guards the place with single shaft of sunlight gilded.

There should be an explosion here

But it is a whirlpool sucking you in, down into it's empty epicentre.

In this tiny exquisite intimacy

He is here where he is not.

It is death which is here eternally entombed.

The Lord is truly risen, allelulia.

To him be glory and power

For all the ages of eternity, allelulia,allelulia.

Wishing you all a very happy and holy Easter and much joy in your faith,

Fr Alex

Livestreaming Mass

Fr Alex is livestreaming Sunday Mass at 9.30am:

- Join online at Fr Alex's facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/alexastinosb>

Follow the daily Readings at Mass: <https://universalis.com/mass.htm> or <https://www.alivepublishing.co.uk/daily-mass-readings/>

Make an Act of Spiritual Communion:

This can be done whilst you watch a live stream of Mass being offered.

My Jesus, I believe that You are present in the Most Holy Sacrament.

I love You above all things, and I desire to receive You into my soul.

Since I cannot at this moment receive You sacramentally, come at least spiritually into my heart.

I embrace You as if You were already there and unite myself wholly to You.

Never permit me to be separated from You.

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- A list of Live Streaming Church's in Archdiocese of Birmingham is available: [link](#). It also includes a link to the daily readings and how to make an Act of Spiritual Communion.
 - Our nearest Live Stream Church is at St Joseph's in Whitnash join online at: <https://www.mcnmedia.tv/camera/st-josephs-whitnash>
 - St Chad's is also livestreaming at <https://www.mcnmedia.tv/camera/st-chads-cathedral-birmingham>
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We Pray for:

The Sick and Housebound: Steven Alford, Mary Barratt, Dennis Barratt, Mena Burn, Sophie Connor, Gary Denstone, Gabrielle Edwardes, Patricia Elliott, Mary Foster, Maciej Grudzinski, Anne Hamilton, Maureen Harper, Brian Harrison, Anthony Hathaway, Tony Jones, John Kemp, Phil Kendrick, Margaret Lamb, John Leary, Mildred Madden, Peggy Madden, Rory Mahon, Mary McCarthy, Mary Murphy, Helena Myczko, Anne Parkinson, Rachael Perks, Vera Roche, John Somers, Cristina Valentino, Sue Wilmore, Barbara Woodgates, Margaret Young, Kathleen Coleman, Kirsty Taylor, and all the sick in our hospitals, nursing homes, own homes and known to us.

Lately Dead and their bereaved: Pam Young, Dom Bernard Swinhoe OSB, John Palmer, Bridget O'Hagan, Ann Kingland, Vicenza Tagliaferri, Dom Louis ODwyer OSB.

Kids Corner

Make an Easter garden children, as crazy as you like!

Please take a photo and email it to stgregorysua@btconnect.com with 'Kids Corner' in the subject. Please keep them to show us all at church. Thanks angels. Fr Alex

Music in our Worship - Chris Danes

Fourty days and forty nights and not and alleluia in sight. Easter is upon us and the liturgy is jammed pack with alleluias! Here's a few suggestions:

- Christ The Lord is Risen Today : <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ztugxfwP4c>
 - Taizé - Surrexit Christus : https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=juhviS_UL2Y
 - Hallelujah Chorus : <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ohagajJvzhU>
(Food Court Flash Mob - a bit of fun for parents and kids!)
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Resources for Faith at home and Family Ministry

Easter Message 2020 – Archbishop Bernard Longley. Filmed in St Edward's Chapel, St Chad's Cathedral. His Grace shares his greetings this Easter season, "a most unusual Easter for all of us", and invites us to pray together [link](#).

BBC Radio Easter Sunday. On Easter Sunday, tune into your local BBC radio station at 8am for Mass with Cardinal Vincent Nichols.

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“It’s written from the heart and it speaks to our hearts.”

The God Who Speaks - Matthew's Gospel Reflection. Weekly Meditations by Fr Dries Van den Akker S.J on the Paintings of St Matthews Gospel by Peter Clare [link](#).

Monastic resources to help you handle isolation and social distancing with Father Christopher Jamison OSB [link](#).

Children’s liturgy resources

- Ten Ten is offering all families and schools the opportunity to access free prayer resources for the home and also have a video for children’s liturgy each week [link](#).
- A mum in Westminster Diocese creates a children’s liturgy video on Saturday evenings for use on Sunday. For those that use Facebook there is a link to page so families in your parishes can create their own ‘watch parties’ and join together with other families [link](#). For those who do not have Facebook here is the link to the YouTube channel [link](#).
- CAFOD link to their children’s liturgy resources [link](#).
- Catholic Mom has useful printable worksheets [link](#).

Exploring the faith together as a family

- Youcat [link](#) - great resource for all ages explaining the teachings of the Catholic Church and has an accompanying app via these links
 - <https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.youcat.daily&hl=en>
 - <https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/youcat-daily/id1447116947?mt=8>

St Vincent de Paul Society [link](#)

Archdiocese of Birmingham [link](#)

Vatican: [link](#)

Saint Corona, Pray for us!



It turns out that the Patron Saint of Epidemics is a little known (until now) girl called St Corona! There’s a lot online if you look her up. It seems she was from Syria and was martyred at the age of 15 by the Romans during the reign of .Marcus Aurelius (C2nd). Her relics are not far from the epicentre of the present pandemic and her feast is 14th May

Good Friday in Stratford-upon-Avon



Although the procession was cancelled this year Stratford Churches Together arranged for the cross to be placed in its usual position in time for Good Friday, one of the most important dates in our Christian calendar.

Stratford-upon-avon Foodbank [link](#) - Donations

These can be left in the plastic box by the presbytery front door. Please note the Foodbank is reopening on Tuesday 31st March at at the Stratford Methodist Church [link](#).

General Information

Newsletter signup: [link](#)

Parish Clergy: Fr Alex Austin OSB stgregorysua@btconnect.com

Parish Contact numbers: 01789 292439

Parish Office: Closed but email is being accessed remotely stgregorysua@btconnect.com

Newsletter: Please send items to be included to stgregorysua@btconnect.com by Thursday evening.

Donations:

1. Post a cheque made payable to St Gregory's Parish
2. Setup a Standing Order or online banking to: St Gregory. Please call for sort code/account number.
3. New Gift Aid envelopes will be available as soon as the Church re-opens.

Gift Aid: To join the scheme, please contact Clive Hamilton on 01789 488047 or by e-mail stgregorysgiftaid@aol.co.uk. If you are already in the scheme, please contact him with any questions or any changes of address or tax status.

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Parish Twitter: Follow us at [@StGregorytheGr3](#)

Parish Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/stgregorysua>

Instagram: Follow Fr Alex at [alexaustinosb](#) where he'll try and post a few inspiring pics!!

Warwick Deanery website: www.warwick-catholicdeanery.org.uk

Archdiocese website: www.birminghamdiocese.org.uk



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