

Church of the Immaculate Conception - Farm Street



Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time (Quinquagesima Sunday) 14th February 2021

PARISH CLERGY

Fr Dominic Robinson SJ, Parish Priest
Fr Chris Pedley SJ; Fr Michael Holman SJ

REGULARLY ASSISTING CLERGY

Fr Damian Howard SJ; Fr Paul Nicholson SJ
Fr Adrian Porter SJ; Fr Laco Sulik SJ

PARISH STAFF

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Parish Office

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MASS SCHEDULE

Monday to Friday: 10am & 6pm

Saturday: 10am & 6pm

Sunday: 11am (Latin) & 6pm

Due to the critical situation in London, all Masses will be celebrated behind locked doors until further notice. Mass can be viewed on our livestreaming page. <https://www.farmstreet.org.uk/livestream>

EXPOSITION OF THE BLESSED SACRAMENT

Monday to Saturday: 11am to 4pm

Sunday: 12.30pm to 4pm

CONFESSIONS

By appointment.

BAPTISM AND WEDDINGS

By appointment. Dates are subject to lockdown developments.

CHURCH OPENING HOURS

Monday to Saturday: 11am to 5.30pm

Sunday: 12.30pm to 5.30pm

LONDON JESUIT CENTRE

All events are suspended until further notice. For more information, contact Anne Paolino at apaolino@jesuit.org.uk

Sunday Homilies & Articles Weekly newsletter articles are uploaded to our website on a weekly basis. They can be viewed at <https://www.farmstreet.org.uk/weekly-articles>. Our website also contains an archive of previous Sunday homilies.

Social Media

Farm Street Church has a strong presence on social media and we regularly update our Twitter account and Facebook page with information relating to the parish and the wider Catholic community.

KEEPING SECRETS

This Sunday's Gospel reading, the story of the healing by Jesus of a leper in the first chapter of Mark, never fails to move and fascinate me whenever I read it or hear it being read.

Two aspects of the story move me. Firstly, it's the condition of the leper. As the first reading from the Book of Leviticus tells us, a leper was excluded by the law of Moses from society, condemned to live outside the camp, the village and the town, wearing torn clothing, with hair dishevelled and shouting "unclean, unclean"!

Secondly, it's the compassion of Jesus. The translation we use at mass speaks of him "feeling sorry for him" while another says he was "moved with pity". An alternative rendering of the original Greek tells us that Jesus was stirred with anger, presumably at the appalling conditions in which the man had to live. Whichever translation we favour, Jesus not only heals the man, he does the unthinkable, he reaches out and touches him. How much that touch says about the God whom Jesus reveals! He is the one whose compassion reaches out and touches all those whom society rejects, not only then, but now.

What is it that fascinates me about this story? It's the fact that Jesus tells the leper to keep what has happened to him a secret. Again and again in Mark's Gospel, Jesus tells those he heals to keep to themselves what has happened. Why does he do this? Reading recently Rowan Williams' remarkable book, "Meeting God in Mark", has set me thinking. Jesus tells people to keep what he has done a secret because he wanted to avoid misunderstanding: he does not want to be widely known as a miracle-worker. To be thought of this way would be a distraction. Of course, to say that his miracles did not matter would be quite wrong. They certainly mattered to the leper, the paralytic, to the blind man and to the many more whom Jesus healed. And they tell us something essential about Jesus. He is the man of compassion who reveals to us God's mercy.

But something else matters more and that is the relationship of trust, dependence and reliance on God which is stirred up in those who encounter him. Jesus wants men and women to know that God is with them, alongside them, even in the darkest and most difficult conditions and moments of life. It's this relationship of trust in the God who acted even in the pain and apparent failure of Jesus, by raising him to life after his death on the cross, that will transform the

followers of Jesus and which through them will transform the world.

What might this Gospel have to say to you and to me today? It makes me think about those whom society rejects. Pope Francis has written about how exclusion from the community is the most painful poverty of all. Do I keep such people at arm's length or can I follow the example of Jesus and in some way reach out and touch them?

Maybe even more than that, we are being asked to focus on how an encounter with Jesus can stir up in us that trust and dependence on God which through us can transform the world.

Maybe this Lent, we can make a point of getting to know Jesus that much more: then our relationship with Jesus will be deeper, our trust in him will be stronger and the more able we will be to live like him in the world today, not least by reaching out and touching those whom today, like this leper, society rejects.

To end with, here's a prayer which has meant a good deal to me as we travel through these strange times, and I hope it will be of help to you as well. It is said to be by Bl Charles de Foucauld (1858 – 1916).

Live today's day. God gives it to you. It belongs to you.

Tomorrow's day belongs to God, not to you.

Do not impose today's worry upon tomorrow.

Tomorrow belongs to God, hand it over to Him.

The present moment is a frail footbridge.

If you weigh it down with yesterday's regrets,

Tomorrow's anxieties,

The footbridge gives way and you lose your footing.

The past? God forgives it.

The future? God gives it.

Live today's day in communion with Him.

Fr Michael Holman SJ

The Pope's Monthly Prayer Intention

In the month of February, Pope Francis encourages us to pray for women suffering from violence. We pray for women who are victims of violence, that they may be protected by society and their sufferings considered and heeded.

Liturgical Calendar

Sun: Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time
Mon: Feria
Tue: Feria
Wed: Ash Wednesday
Thu: Lent feria
Fri: Lent feria
Sat: Lent feria
Sun: First Sunday in Lent

Daily Bible Readings

Sun: Leviticus 12:1-2, 44-46;
 I Corinthians 10:31-11:1; Mark 1:40-45
Mon: Genesis 4:1-15,25; Mark 8:11-13
Tue: Genesis 6:1 – 7:10; Mark 8:14-21
Wed: Joel 2:12-18; II Corinthians 5:20-6:2;
 Matthew 6:1-18
Thu: Deuteronomy 30:15-20; Luke 9:22-25
Fri: Isaiah 58:1-9; Matthew 9:14-15
Sat: Isaiah 58:9-14; Luke 5:27-32
Sun: Genesis 9:8-15; I Peter 3:18-22;
 Mark 1:12-15

Suspension of Public Worship

Following a consultation led by the Parish Pastoral Council we have decided that, in the interests of public safety and following the directive of both the Mayor of London and the Prime Minister that people stay at home and use public transport only for essential travel, public Masses will be suspended as of Friday 22nd January until the critical situation in London regarding the possibility of COVID and its new variants' infection improves.

The church will now be open from 11am – 5:30pm (on Sunday from 12:30pm) with adoration of the Blessed Sacrament until 4pm. There will be two livestreamed Masses Monday to Saturday at 10am and 6pm (on Saturday the Vigil Mass of Sunday) and on Sunday 11am Solemn Latin and 6pm in English with music.

Many thanks for your understanding.

Face Covering Update

'Face coverings will be mandatory in Places of Worship from Saturday 8th August 2020. All those who are attending churches must wear a face covering unless they are exempt from doing so. This is for the good of all who gather in the Church for Mass [or for private prayer] as it is an enclosed public space where there are people from differing households who they do not normally meet.' (*Statement issued by the Bishops' Conference*). Further information can be found on the relevant section of the Government's website.

Ash Wednesday

Ash Wednesday will be celebrated this year on Wednesday 17th February. Due to the severity of the pandemic in London, public Masses continue to be suspended at Farm Street Church. Mass will be celebrated behind closed doors at 10am and 6pm and can be viewed on our website. There will be no distribution of ashes at Farm Street Church this year. The opening times will be slightly different for this one day: The church will be open from 11am to 12.30pm, and from 1.30pm to 5.30pm. For more information about how to mark this important day during these unusual times, please see the pastoral letter from the Archbishop of Westminster, Vincent Cardinal Nichols, at the end of this newsletter.

Encounters with Jesus in Lent

Farm Street Church and The Grosvenor Chapel are running a joint Lent reflection course titled 'Encounters with Jesus'. This will be held via Zoom at 8pm on six consecutive Wednesdays, beginning on the 24th February and concluding on the 31st March. The course will reflect on the encounters with Jesus experienced by people in the Gospels and will use the Spiritual Exercises of St Ignatius of Loyola as a guide.

Each session will consist of 1.) A Brief Introduction, 2.) A Scriptural Reading, 3.) A 20-minute Guided Meditation on the Reading, 4.) Break out rooms to reflect on the Guided Meditation (20 minutes) with Facilitator in each Group 5.) Return to plenary and Final Prayers.

The theme of each week will be:

- Week 1: Curing of the leper Mk 2:40-45
- Week 2: Call of the first disciples Mt 4:18-22
- Week 3: Walking on the water Mt 14:22-33
- Week 4: Bartimaeus Mk 10:46-52
- Week 5: This man was Son of God Mk 15: 33-39
- Week 6. Mary at the tomb Jn 20: 11-18

If you would like to participate in this course, please contact the Parish Secretary at farmstreetoffice@rcdow.org.uk for the Zoom details.

Scripture Speaks

"Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus". Philippians 4:6-7

Mass intention

If you would like a Mass to be celebrated for a specific intention, please contact the Parish Secretary at farmstreetoffice@rcdow.org.uk

A Prayer if Anxious

*Do not look forward in fear to the changes in life;
rather, look to them with full hope that as they arise,
God, whose very own you are,
will lead you safely through all things;
and when you cannot stand it,
God will carry you in His arms.
Do not fear what may happen tomorrow;
the same understanding Father who cares for
you today will take care of you then and every day.
He will either shield you from suffering
or will give you unfailing strength to bear it.
Be at peace,
and put aside all anxious thoughts and imaginations.
St Francis De Sales*

Society for Ecumenical Studies Talk

The Society for Ecumenical Studies is hosting an online seminar to mark the 850th anniversary of the murder of St Thomas Becket. The seminar is titled 'St Thomas Becket: An inspiration for the churches today?' and will take place via Zoom at 7.30pm on Tuesday 23rd February.

The keynote speaker is Professor Henry Mayr-Harting, Emeritus Regius Professor of Ecclesiastical History, University of Oxford. Responses by:

Revd. Dr. Keith Clements, former General Secretary of the Conference of European Churches who will reflect on Church-State relations;

and

Archbishop Angaelos, Coptic Orthodox Archbishop of London who will speak about martyrdom today.

Chair: Fr. Dominic Robinson S.J., Vice-chair, SfES

To book, please go to <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/thomas-becket-an-inspiration-for-the-churches-today-tickets-139835701347>

For more information, please contact the secretary at sfes.secretary@gmail.com

Young Catholic Lenten Retreat

Join like-minded people in the 18-30 age bracket who are motivated by social action and social justice with Caritas Westminster and Young Caritas Westminster. The 'Let Us Dream' Lenten Retreat is an opportunity to break open the themes discussed in the Pope's latest book, and to discover and share the things speaking to your heart this Lent.

Retreatants will attend three online sessions to share, grow, and discern together. Alongside this is the opportunity for one-to-one accompaniment provided by trained guides.

Retreatants will be provided with a pack, containing a copy of 'Let Us Dream' and notebook to write down your reflections.

Sessions will have spiritual input from the Jesuit Young Adult Ministry, Diocese of Westminster Youth Ministry and Young Caritas.

Sessions will be held fortnightly, beginning on the 23rd February.

For more information and to book a place, please visit <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/young-caritas-let-us-dream-lenten-retreat-tickets-138923194013>

Holy Land Pilgrimage

The Aid to the Church in Need's Pilgrimage to the Holy Land is due to take place between Friday 12 November and Saturday 20 November 2021. Pilgrims will not only visit Holy sites, but will have the chance to visit ACN projects, as well as meeting with local Church leaders and Christian families.

The pilgrimage will be led by Father Dominic Robinson SJ, ACN UK's National Ecclesiastical Assistant and Neville Kyrke-Smith, National Director of ACN UK. The nine-day itinerary will take in locations of important religious and historical importance: Bethlehem, Mount of Olives, Mount Zion, Old City Jerusalem, Qumran, Dead Sea, Galilee, Cana, Nazareth and Tiberias. For more information, please visit <https://acnuk.org/event/aid-to-the-church-in-needs-pilgrimage-to-the-holy-land-2021/>

Scripture Speaks

"And I am convinced that nothing can ever separate us from God's love. Neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither our fears for today nor our worries about tomorrow—not even the powers of hell can separate us from God's love."

Romans 8:38-39

Help the Homeless Donation Hub

During the first Covid 19 lockdown in the Spring 2020, Companions of the Order of Malta and Westminster City Council worked in partnership to start a donation hub for the homeless. The aim was to streamline the donations available and produce a circular network where the necessary supplies were available to support vulnerable individuals being housed in the hotels and hostels and the street population.

35,000 items were sorted and packed at St Joseph's Hall, Brompton Oratory from April to July and then delivered to the homeless. The donation hub opened again in November 2020, and we open to receive donations again.

Donation Hub location:

St Joseph's Hall, 5 Thurloe Place, Knightsbridge,
London SW7 2RR. .

Opening times for receiving donations:

Wednesday 2 – 5.30pm

Wednesday 6.30 – 8pm (by arrangement)

Saturday 10.30am – 2pm.

Please only deliver donations at these times.

Types of Donations:

Toiletries – only unopened items please
Men and women's clothes (no children's
clothes please)

Entertainment items e.g. books – fact or
fiction/crosswords/puzzles/art and craft items
(please ensure the books are appropriate
eg No recipe books)

Thank you very much for any support you can give.

Contact: Kate MacKenzie

at London.companionsofmalta@gmail.com if you
have any queries.

Prayer to St Corona

Lord Jesus Christ, You came into this world for our salvation. Look kindly on us now, we pray, that we, and all those who serve You, might be kept safe from this epidemic. Heal those who are sick, comfort the suffering, bring back those gone astray and, above all, increase our faith, O Lord.

Give us the grace to follow You and, like the martyr St Corona, who gave her life for the love of You, to take up our crosses daily without fear or hesitation.

Lord Jesus Christ, Son of the living God, have mercy on us and on the whole world. Amen.

St Corona, patroness of epidemic victims, pray for us.

Holy Week Book

During Lent last year, Fr Richard Nesbitt, parish priest of Our Lady of Fatima, White City, found inspiration to write a series of 15 poems on the themes of Our Lord's passion, death and resurrection. Through the Friends of the Holy Land charity, a number of people in the Holy Land were then approached to offer their reflections on the Scriptures for Holy Week, the poems and their own personal experiences. The result is *Holy Week Voices from the Holy Land*, a prayerful and timely resource. The proceeds of this book (priced at £7.99 plus postage and packaging) will go to the Friends of the Holy Land to aid their work with the neediest of our brothers and sisters in the Holy Land. For more information and to order a copy of this book, please visit <https://rcdow.org.uk/faith/news/holy-week-voices/>

Act of Perfect Contrition

My God, I am sorry for my sins with all my heart. In choosing to do wrong and failing to do good, I have sinned against You, whom I should love above all things. I firmly intend, with Your help, to do penance, to sin no more, to avoid whatever leads me to sin, and to confess my sins when possible.

Act of Spiritual Communion

Jesus, I believe you are present in the most holy sacrament of the Eucharist. I love You above all things, and I desire to receive You and draw closer to You. Since I cannot receive Your body and blood sacramentally at this time, come to me spiritually. Help me to embrace You more deeply and unite myself more wholly to You. Never permit me to be separated from Your love. Amen

Supporting the Parish

We are grateful to everyone who has continued to financially support the church during the months of disruption caused by the pandemic. We are mindful that many people are currently struggling financially and may not be able to donate as they once did. If you can donate to the work of the parish, we would ask that you consider doing so in a way that avoids physical cash. This is for the safety of our staff, who need to physically count any money that is donated. Please consider donating via our website, setting up a standing order, or donating via the cashless terminals in the church. We are also implementing a new donating system called Givt, which will allow contactless donations via mobile phones. If you would like to donate via standing order, please contact the parish Finance Officer at farmstreetfin@rcdow.org.uk. Thank you again for your support.

ARCHBISHOP'S HOUSE, WESTMINSTER,
LONDON, SW1P 1QJ



**Pastoral Letter for the Sixth Sunday in Ordinary
Time**

Shortly it will be Ash Wednesday, a day rich in associations and symbolism. It marks the beginning a Lent, a time for turning again to the practice of our faith, in prayer, self-denial (fasting) and practical generosity (almsgiving). Ash Wednesday is the doorway into this season of renewal.

As we cross this threshold we customarily receive ashes on our foreheads, in the sign of the cross. This is a public mark of our turning again to God, seeking his mercy, forgiveness and help. We use these words: 'Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return'. Yes, we cannot pretend otherwise. Or: 'Repent, and believe in the Gospel'. Yes, we seek the one thing that is absolutely necessary: the grace of God.

This year receiving ashes in church is going to be difficult. Yes, our churches are safe if the protective measures are fulfilled. But we must all be very careful about travelling too far. Some churches will of course be open for the celebration of Mass as usual. But I have asked them not to make extra provision for Ash Wednesday. We must be so careful and cooperative in the measures we must take, to protect ourselves and to protect others.

I now want to emphasise an important point. Receiving ashes is an outward sign of an inner step, a movement of the heart towards our beloved Lord. This year I invite you to concentrate much more on this inner, spiritual movement than on its outward manifestation in the imposition of ashes.

My suggestion is this: celebrate Ash Wednesday at home, with your family, in the household or 'support bubble' of which you are a part. Gather for a while. Read the prayer which I offer. Bless each other by making the sign of the cross on each other's forehead. Spent some time praying in a way that you know. But please, make this a prayer of your heart for God's mercy upon this world struggling to cope with the terrible pandemic and the devastation it is bringing.

Here is a prayer:

'Lord God, with all our hearts we beseech you: have mercy on your people; spare your people; strengthen all people in the struggle against the havoc of this pandemic. Lord our God, without you we are so weak

and our courage so limited. Give us your strength; give us your love; give us wisdom and skill to continue this fight. Spare your people, O Lord we pray. Comfort those who mourn and gather into your kingdom all who have died. We make this prayer through Christ our Lord, who died and rose to life, who lives and reigns with you, for ever and ever. Amen.'

Then, bless each other, using one of the two traditional formulas I have quoted earlier in this letter. Then continue with your own prayers. A pattern is suggested at the end of this letter.

As a child, my mother or father used to come to my bedside each night to settle me for sleep. I was kissed goodnight and then, either my Mum or Dad would make the sign of the cross on my forehead. They gave me their blessing. This brought me such security. I remember it to this day. Then I slept in peace.

So please do not hesitate, within your household or 'bubble', to bless each other on this Ash Wednesday. We do well to remember together our need of the good Lord. Together, and through each other, he wants to comfort and reassure us of his loving presence. If, on this day, we set aside every pretence that we can do everything of ourselves, then we create in our hearts and lives the space for God's grace and strength to find a home in us.

This is the great invitation of Ash Wednesday and of the weeks of Lent which follow. Please do take up this invitation. Open your hearts to the gift of God's presence to support, comfort and strengthen you. This year, it may be best to do this, not by going to church, but by sharing the prayer, the blessing and this moment of dedication within the love of your family and friends.

Please do include me in your prayers, too.
May God bless you all,

+ Vincent Nichols

+ Cardinal Vincent Nichols
Archbishop of Westminster

Ash Wednesday at Home

1. Gather together and start with the Sign of the Cross.
 2. Read the Gospel for today. It is from St Matthew's Gospel, 6.1-6 and 16-18.
 3. Say together the prayer given in this Pastoral Letter.
 4. Make the Sign of the Cross on each other's forehead, using the words you choose.
 5. Pray together: the Our Father; the Hail Mary; each one with his or her own prayer or intention.
 6. Conclude with the 'Glory be to the Father...'
 7. Give each other a sign of peace.
- So Lent begins!